

COMIC.

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CORKEY:

OR, THE

Tricks and Travels of a Supe.

By the Author of "Skinny, the Tin Peddler."

PART I.

FIRST MUSIC IN THE OLD BOWERY

"msee!"
"tee!"

"Ain't Corkey supein' it to-night?"

"You bet, an' that's wot our feller's goin' in for. He's goin' on fer a robber, an' he's in a big sord fight in er sekond act."

"Bully for Corkey! Blowed if he won't git into reg'lar actin' soon."

Just then Limsee saw an opening in the crowd at the box-office, and made a bolt for it, leaving Johnny at the top of the steps to work out as best he might his own chance of getting in.

It was the first night of a thrilling, blood-curdling, melodrama, with a new star tragedian at the Old Bowery.

The front of the theater was all ablaze with lights

spouting up a tremendous stream of lava, and stones enough to pave an entire street.

"Limsee's a muffin, that's wot he is," said Johnny. "I'll bile around inter 'Lizebeth Street an' see 'f I can't git a slide in."

And around he went.

There was the usual gathering of boys, most of them his chums—about the stage door.

As they were talking a carriage drove up to the curb. The door was opened and a woman, deeply veiled, came out.

"Here, bub, take this here basket; lively, now," said the driver, lifting from between his feet a champagne basket.



Down went rocks, platform, brigands, distressed maiden and noblemen's retainers, smash upon the stage, with Corkey on top.

"Goin' in on a check?"

"Wat er yer givin' me? Say, I ain't no check snoozer, I ain't. You kin jest bet yer bottom nickel I'm goin' in on a square ticket. That's my gait."

"Where's them other duffers, hey?"

"They's all gone round to the stage door in 'Lizebeth Street with Corkey."

and transparencies, and with festoons of flags and streamers.

High overhead, and against the white columns, was an immense illuminated transparency, upon which was represented six black-whiskered ruffians of the deepest dye, fighting a fierce combat with a nobleman of high degree, in flaming red tights, yellow boots and blue tonic; while as a background, a volcano was

Johnny and a half a dozen of his chums made a desperate rush to be the "bub" selected.

Johnny beat them. He reached up and caught the basket.

And out of sight into the realms beyond the door, past the savage old doorkeeper, following the woman, went Johnny.

Johnnie being in, now for Corkey.

Corkey was all the name anybody had ever known him by. He had been a supe—one of the regulars—for two seasons at the Bowery, and this was the beginning of the third.

He wasn't more than sixteen, but he looked like a high-shouldered, twenty-five year old man cut down to fit a thin-legged boy's clothes.

Or, as the property man said: "His old man biled down his grandfather, and didn't git his shoulders into the pot."

Out of his stage dress he wore as his every day dress, a wide-sleeved coat, that hung upon him like a flapping sail, and a pair of pants the original material of which no mortal could have satisfactorily decided.

Corkey was not by any means bad looking; he had a bright, clear eye, and a disposition—well, it wasn't wicked—but it was of that sort which "wouldn't stand any nonsense from anybody."

During his last season some of the actors in the theater had devoted themselves to guying the supers and putting up sundry "jobs," otherwise practical jokes, upon them, and Corkey was, upon several occasions, their special target.

And Corkey had resolved to have his revenge.

"Ef I don't git hunk on 'em, I ain't Corkey!"

Corkey had naturally drifted into being a supe by night.

No better-hearted, more generous boy lived than he; and if he wasn't educated and all that, he was at least true to his friends, or rather, as he had no special friend—to those who befriended him, or gave him a kindly "boost" on his way.

But those who did not were attended to and remembered, as will be seen by our boys, when they have read this story of his life.

After his daytime Clumsy Johnny had carried in the woman's basket, and safely deposited it in her dressing-room, he came down upon the stage to look for Corkey.

He had on several occasions trod the stage before, and its wenders and mysteries were not new to him.

After being pushed about, shoved and sworn at by the scene shifters, who were setting the stage, and wrestling with flats and wings, set pieces, howling up to the flies at the flymen on the galleries, above the stage, he met Corkey in one of the entrances.

Corkey was mad—and—dressed.

His thin legs in tights, loose enough for drawers; his body arrayed in a baggy tunic drawn about his waist with a black leather belt, and with his face adorned by a mixture of vermilion and chalk, and a pair of fierce mustaches which the night before had been worn by a grand Turk, he was ready for business as one of the desperate brigands.

"Hello, Corkey," said Johnny.

"How'd yer git in?" was the reply.

"Kerried Mrs. Jones' basket in. I say, Corkey, ain't this high—eh?"

"Here, you supes, git out of this entrance," bawled one of the stage carpenters, crowding in with a great set piece supposed to be a huge pile of rocks—"why don't yer stay in yer dressin'-room till your sent fer?" and he gave Corkey a push which sent him over backwards against Johnny, and caused the two to tumble over against one of the "wings."

"I'll fix that feller!" said Corkey, as he gathered himself up "an' when I do he'll know it, yer bet. I say, Johnny d'yer see that feller in silk tights and spangled cap down there by the prompt place? That's that air new star wat does the leadin' part. Oh, ain't he got a voice!"

Presently the orchestra ceased its bang-whanging, the noise of the restless audience in front rolled in like the sound of the ocean, and the prompter rushed out and gesticulating wildly, with prompt book in his hand, cried out, "clear stage."

Then everybody ran off, the little bell tinkled away up in the regions above, the great curtain rolled up and the play began.

"I must git over to the other side, Johnny. I've got to come down the mountains with a lot of other robbers. Is Limsee in the gallery?"

"Yes, he an' a lot of the fellars, an' they're goin' to give you a big old hi, hi, sure."

"Take keer of yerself, Johnny; don't git in the way of the shifters, an' keep yer eye skinned an' yer'll see fun fore the play's over. It's a fust night, an' subhin' always goes wrong on a fust night. I'll find yer wen ther curtain goes down."

Corkey disappeared, and Johnny gazed out upon the stage.

The play was terribly exciting; there was a murder in the first scene, and the nobleman in red tights ran away up the rocks with a young girl in snow-white muslin and blue ribbons, when he was met by Corkey and half a dozen of the savage brigands.

The nobleman drew his sword and the girl uttered an awful shriek and fainted on his left arm.

"Come on, vile wretches!" shouted the nobleman, in a hoarse voice. "If there were a million of ye I'd defy ye all, cowards that ye are!"

The gallery hi-hied and roared, and the orchestra struck up, and the combat began.

There was fun—for some.

Corkey crossed swords with the nobleman, as he had been told to at rehearsal.

"Two up and two down," growled the nobleman; "you infernal idiot!"

"Ist yourself," said Corkey, defiantly.

Hanging down from the flies behind the platform, upon which the thrilling scene was being enacted,

was a wire with a hook at the end of it, which had been used to let down to the stage one of the set pieces. It was within easy reach.

It was Corkey's business after a skirmish with his sword to rush upon the nobleman, and struggle desperately with him, while the rest of the brigands rushed in and attempted to carry off the girl.

This was all very nice and effective, or would have been had everything worked right.

But it didn't.

Corkey up on that high platform seven or eight feet from the stage closed in upon the ill-fated nobleman, and the other brigands rushed upon the ill-fated maiden.

Corkey caught sight of the dangling wire. "Here's a chance to git hunk on this feller. Mebbe I am a jit," he thought.

He reached out one hand and caught the wire, and unseen by any one, in a second he hitched the hook under the leather waist belt of the nobleman.

Something happened then that Corkey hadn't calculated on.

Just as the tableau was formed and the retainers of the nobleman rushed on from the opposite side to rescue him from the brigands, and the audience were stamping and yelling in its excitement, and the orchestra was blowing its loudest, and the nobleman, throwing off Corkey, was flourishing his sword, striking a stunning attitude, and shouting: "Now, villains, ye are in my power!" the platform gave way and there was a crash.

Down went the whole pile of canvas rocks, the boards of the platform, brigands, distressed maiden and the nobleman's retainers in a heap, smash upon the stage, with Corkey on top.

But the nobleman didn't go down.

With that hook under his belt he staid where he was, and hung by the middle, suspended in the air, striking out with legs and arms, roaring for help.

"Let me down or I'll tear loose!" cried the nobleman, paddling and kicking against the empty air, as if he were swimming for his life against the tide at Hell Gate.

"Histe up that rope!" shouted the prompter, rushing up the stage.

"Gadalmitey!" groaned the new star, striding down the stage behind the wings, "and they call this a theater!"

"Let down the curtain!" howled the short, puffy stage manager, as red in the face as an auctioneer's flag.

In front, the audience roared and kicked, and stamped and whistled, and became wild with delight over this fun on the stage. The orchestra set up an extra blowing, but neither bass drums, nor horn, and trombone, could run the gamut above the din in front.

Meanwhile Corkey had picked himself up from the stage, and followed by the supes, brigands, and noble retainers all in a bunch got off the stage. The distressed maiden was lifted up and carried off fearfully frightened, but not much damaged physically and a stiff horn of gin intended for the star, but intercepted by the low comedy man, being poured into her countenance, she soon revived sufficiently to raise old Cain because her muslin skirt was nearly ripped off.

"I'm a jit, am I? Looks like it, don't it, Johnny?" said Corkey, grinning.

"Thunder and lightning!" bawled the stage manager; "let the curtain down."

Corkey with great show of alacrity ran across the stage to the prompter's place and rang what he thought was the curtain bell.

Instead of that tinkler he pulled a trap bell.

The man under the stage, knowing a vampire trap was to be used in the piece, knew nothing but to obey signals and at once unbarred and set the spring trap.

A moment after the prompter rang the curtain bell, at the same time giving Corkey a boost which sent him head first into the bread basket of the property man and then they both went rolling over.

As the curtain began to descend the new star, followed by the stage manager, made a dive to cross the stage.

They got as far as the trap, and down went the stage manager, neck and heels, and before he could stop himself the new star plunged after him into the lower depths of "under the stage."

Then the audience roared itself hoarse, and the scene was a pandemonium let loose until the falling curtain shut the fun out from sight.

The suspended nobleman was let down, and immediately expressed his unalterable determination to scalp that "wretch Corkey."

In the second and third acts Corkey had to appear as one of a band of Turks, the acting of "blood" being changed from the rocky gorges of Italy to the land of Mahomet.

So Corkey was changing his bandit dress and cap for that of a big turbaned Turk, in the supes' dressing-room.

The orchestra struck up a mixture of noise, and the audience gradually subsided into comparative quiet, and under the soothing influence of peanuts and fine cut, awaited the rest of the play.

At last the stage was set, and up went the curtain on the "Garden of the Grand Vizier."

Corkey looked as pleased as if he were the embodiment of a grin. He fairly danced with delight.

Johnny, during the time the curtain was down, had secured the privilege of "doin' de basket" for Mrs. Jones every night.

"I say, Corkey, can't I git in fer a supe, hey?"

"You, Johnny? Why, there ain't nary dignity in you. You've got to brace up—practice on dumbbells and gymnastic yerself. But seein' it's you, Johnny, I'll try. Jest wait till I buzz the cappen."

The captain of the supes was accordingly buzzed a minute or two afterwards, and after a critical examination of Johnny's proportions accepted him on trial.

"Not much on legs, and no body for shape suits," said the captain; "but you kin fill them out. Ever on the stage before?"

"Lot's," replied Johnny, boldly.

"Well, you git here to-morrow at 'leven o'clock an' I'll tell you what you're to do," and the cap'n marched off up the stage. The second scene was run on in front grooves, and represented a grove adjoining the seraglio.

It so happened that behind this front scene trouble lay hidden for somebody.

Who that somebody was, will soon be discovered.

The next scene was to be the whole depth of the stage and was to represent the interior of a gorgeous temple with a magnificent throne in the center.

Just before the front scene was to be changed, the prompter discovered something wrong in the set of the stage. There had to be some alterations made.

The supers were gathered around waiting to take the various positions assigned them at change of scene.

But where was Corkey? If a special detective had been on his track he would have seen Corkey in his Turkish dress, behind a pile of old scenes doing something with one of those bell-mouthed guns which upon the stage are supposed to be the right thing for Turkish soldiers and pirates.

"There," said Corkey to himself. "If that air gun don't miss fire there 'll be another dose for the chap that called me jit. He wont like it no better'n he did his hangin' match. That's four of the shooters I've fixed since."

Then Corkey, while the prompter, property man and scene-shifters were all making the temple scene right, stole quietly around to the property-room. He looked in. Nobody there. The other three bell-mouthed howitzers were standing there together. He placed the one he had been doctoring beside fellows.

Then Corkey stole out with innocence upon his face and the delightful thought upon his lips—guess that heavy cuss won't call me a jit after I through with him."

The temple was set up and the front scene off.

By and by the object of Corkey's wrath was brought over a prisoner by a lot of Turkish soldiers, of whom Corkey was one.

The grand mogul came on and after some more dramatic dialogue between the distressed nobleman and his royal highness, the nobleman was sentenced to immediate death.

Corkey grinned and winked at Johnny, who was standing in an opposite entrance watching the scene.

"Dog!" exclaimed the mogul from his throne. "Dog of an infidel, thou hast profaned with thy accursed feet the sacred ground of the prophet's most holy temple. Thou shalt die! Bismillah, I have said it!" and the stern mogul turned his head up the stage, and ejected a quid of fine cut, which during the scene had considerably thickened his voice.

Then the bold nobleman had his speech. It was full of defiance and swinging of arms.

The mogul, having his mouth clear, resumed his seat and arranging his robes, said:

"Chris-tshun dog, you die the dog's death! The sacred bow-string shall not be your doom. You shall be shot. Bismillah, I have said it. Guards attend!"

The guards, Corkey and four other faithful Turks, ranged themselves in line, and raising those bell-mouthed guns, took sight, ready for the word to fire from the grand mogul.

"Slaves," said he with an imperial wave of the hand, "advance."

Corkey and the other slaves advanced as per rehearsal, one step, with all their guns pointed at the defiant nobleman.

Little did he dream of what was to come.

The audience in front were in breathless expectancy. It being a new play, the boys in the gallery didn't understand it, and were quivering with excitement to know what would come next.

They hadn't long to wait.

"Slaves! let the infidel perish! Fire!"

Every bell-mouth gun went off, and awful was the result to that unfortunate nobleman.

Corkey had fixed the bell-mouth withont fail.

The moment they were fired, that nobleman (his name in private life was Jake Nubbins), went backward about five feet, and fell against one of the wings as thoroughly drenched with blood-colored water as if he had taken a bath in a slaughter-house.

Drenched was no word for it.

The people in front seeing him as they thought, covered and dripping with blood, and his face looking like a mass of gore, made a dreadful outcry, believing he was really shot, and that some fearful mistake had been made.

The instant the supers beheld him drop, they dropped the guns as if they were red-hot poker, and skipped on a dead run for the stage door. Each one of them was certain his gun was the weapon that had done the work.

As for the nobleman, this additional misfortune was enough to settle him. It was a tremendous ducking he had got.



The supe sprang out of the barrel, with his blazing head, and ran wildly about the stage roaring: "Put me out!"

"Murder!" shrieked one of the women upon the stage.

"Darn them billmasters," ripped the stage manager.

Down went the curtain with a tumult in front, and fright upon the stage.

But the nobleman shortly discovered that he was entirely sound and without a bullet or shot in him. Then he rallied, and was able to prance up and do some very heavy swearing at the property man.

Amid all the hubbub and uproar, Corkey seemed as placid as a bowl of milk.

"Wasn't it a bustin' old sell?" he said to Johnny.

"Wat was it into them guns, hey?"

"Don't say nothin'. I fixed 'em. You see, I had a lot of little injy-rubber wads, so I fust jammed one inter each gun an' then poured in the bar'l chuck up wid der red water paint, an' then piked in another rubber wad on top, and set 'em away. Wen we fired 'em that cuss got his souse, you bet."

The stage manager pitched into the property man. The new star raved about like a wild man, while the uproar in front grew louder than ever.

The stage manager went in front of the curtain and made a speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began.

"Is the feller dead?" roared the crowd in the gallery.

"Go bag yer head!" cried Limsee and a chorus of his chums.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I"—

"Cheese it! Tell us 'bout the feller that's shot."

"There's nobody shot!" shouted the manager, waving his hands and arms like a windmill. "It was only"—

"Go on with the show!"

"Histe the rag!"

"Silence! Go on wid yer chin."

"Gimme my money back!"

"Corkey, Corkey!" Then the din of yells for Corkey from the gallery drowned all other sound, and the stage manager went off in disgust.

Again the orchestra struck up.

The cries of "histe the rag!" the whistles and cat calls, finally weakened down in a general tramp-tramp beating time with their feet by the lively ones in front, now and then mingled with cries for "Corkey!"

"Who is this Corkey?" asked the new star in his heaviest guttural tones.

"Corkey—Corkey!" repeated the stage manager. "Why, well, I'm hanged if I know. Ask the prompter. Perhaps it's a nickname for one of the company."

"Who in blazes is this Corkey, the gallery boys are howling about?" said the stage manager, catching

the prompter on the wing as he was crossing the stage.

"Corkey? I've heard the name. Must be one of the supernumeraries—better ask the captain."

"Captain of the supes, eh?" Then the stage manager hunted up the captain of the supes.

He found him sitting upon a pirate's treasure box, engaged in an exceedingly confidential conversation with a pug-nosed ballet girl in short skirts, very much soiled tights, and with something less than a pound of chalk and cheap vermilion scattered in uneven patches upon her face.

"Say, Bill," said the stage manager, "who's this Corkey the boys are yelling about in front?"

"Corkey—why he's one of us."

"Been here all the season?"

"No, only came back last week. He suped it through last season and the season before that."

"Good for anything?"

"S good as any of them, sir."

"Where is he—go find him and bring him to me."

"Yes, sir, and off started the captain in search of the popular supe."

Now, while this questioning of the captain had been going on, Corkey happened to be standing with Johnny in the semi-darkness behind a set of wings and set pieces which were piled against the wall.

He overheard it, and a gloomy suspicion came upon him that the stage manager by some means had discovered the secret of the nobleman's troubles, and had an idea of giving him a bouncing.

So when the captain went off towards the supe's dressing-room, Corkey quietly got up, crossed the stage and descended the narrow stairs which led to the orchestra-room beneath.

"I ain't on in the fust of the last act anyhow, an when the curtain goes up they'll forgit all about it," thought Corkey.

The musicians were all out in the orchestra playing, and the room was half dark and deserted.

"What's this?" said Corkey, stooping over the object of his curiosity and picking it up.

"I'm slewed if it ain't a property ham. How'd it git down here, I wonder?"

A 'property ham,' be it known, is a bag made of canvas, painted yellow, and stuffed with sawdust and straw, so as to closely resemble in shape that article of food.

"Wonder ef one of them fiddlers was tryin' to make a fiddle of it. They don't know much better'n that."

At that instant he heard steps slowly descending the wooden stairs, which were but a few feet beyond the music-room door.

"I wonder who that is?"

He cautiously peered outside. He could barely distinguish the outlines of the man, or whoever it was coming down. But he thought he recognized him.

"Derned if it isn't that swell supe that's bin puttin' on airs. I'll bet he's a lookin' fur me. I've bin wantin' to get at him ever since last winter, 'thout his knowin' it. Blowed ef I don't git in at him now, ef it busts me."

Corkey bethought him of the ham.

"I'll give him a swat on the mug wid this prop faker's ham. I orter have some eggs to go wid it. It's him sure. He's a feller thet supes it fer nothin' and cuts other fellers out of a job, cos he's learnin' to act. I'll give him a tech of actin'!"

And he did.

Corkey stood back just within the edge of the door, grasping the knuckle end of the stuffed ham, and with a broad grin upon his face, waited for the coming "swell."

Just as the unsuspecting victim came upon the threshold of the door, Corkey drew back and struck out with that ham.

It took the victim square in the face and knocked him back against the staircase.

Corkey dropped the ham, and slipping out into the darkness, skipped up the stairs in double quick time.

"Murder!" roared the voice of the ham-struck individual.

Corkey heard it and almost turned pale, for it was not the voice of the swell supe.

It was the voice of the stage manager, and he had mistaken him in the darkness for "the other fellow."

"My goose is cooked if his isn't," said Corkey.

There was a general rush down the wooden stairs in answer to the cry of the distressed stage manager. Corkey joined the supes in one of the entrances.

"Where's that hollerin'?" he asked.

"Down in under the stage," answered one of the boys.

"Somebody's fell down them stairs," suggested Corkey, as, following the rest, he marched upon the stage the noblest Turk of them all.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT morning there was the promise of a high old time at the Old Bowery, after rehearsal had commenced.

The boys were all on hand ready to be put through their regular drill as soldiers and Peruvians by the captain of the supes. They were gathered at the back of the stages, behind the flats, which had been partly run out, leaving room at the center for free passage by the actors in rehearsing.

The prompter sat at his little table, and the stage manager on the opposite side at his little table.

"You jes' wait an' you'll see old Growler a goin' wild," said Corkey, to Johnny his pal.

Old Growler was Corkey's name for the stage manager.

All the supes as well as the ballet girls were down on "Growler," because at the beginning of the season he had cut down their nightly wages and had otherwise mortally offended them, specially Corkey, by refusing to give them passes to the front of the house when they were not needed on the stage.

"H's a old snoozer anyhow," said Johnny; "an' ef there's any game put up onto him you kin count me in every time. Sure pop."

And Corkey, out of pure love of mischief, had put up a job.

That morning he had come to the theater much earlier than usual, an hour before any of the people, carpenter or painters had put in an appearance.

The stage doorkeeper was the only one whom he saw, and that individual was sitting on his old stool smoking a short pipe and grumbling as usual.

Corkey leaped in and crossed the deserted, lonesome stage down to the prompt place.

Above his desk or shelf were the pulls or knobs of the bell wires which connected with the various trap, curtain and drop bells, and the speaking-tube leading to the orchestra leader's stand.

Now it struck Corkey that it wouldn't take more than five minutes to fix these wires so that "them high-toned duffers that thinks us supers ain't nothin' but dogs," would "git up and git lively."

And he did fix them.

The wires all ran up close together, so closely that they looked as if they were all twisted together.

Getting on top of a high stool which stood near, so that he could have an easy reach of it, Corkey untwisted three or four of the wires from their pulleys or knobs, and reversing them, twisted them fast again, but to different knobs than they had been attached to.

Thus the curtain bell wire was fastened to the double trap bell knob, and the drop bell wire to the orchestra bell knob.

Then he concluded his little game by taking off the mouth-piece of the speaking-tube leading down to the orchestra leader's stand, poured into the pipe nearly half a pint of pulverized charcoal, put on the mouth-piece, and, getting down from the stool, walked away chuckling over what a racket it would give "them duffers," if not at rehearsal, at night during performance.

Then at rehearsal time he came back.

"Won't der fellers in de gallery git up a howl," said Johnny, when Corkey had whispered to him what he had cooked up.

"They won't howl half as much as them duffers in the play," answered Corkey. "Jest you simmer down till the old thing works off."

They were to play Pizarro that night, and as the bills announced "Rolla" was to be performed by a young amateur—it being his "first appearance on any stage."

All the boys knew Pizarro by heart backwards, for they had seen all the big actors in it over and over again.

Corkey "gunned" the amateur at rehearsal, took him all in, and set him down mentally as a "putty-head."

"Ef he gits too close to de orkister, de first tool of old Baldy's trombone'll blow him inter de sky borders, sure," was the opinion of Corkey.

Nothing, however, happened at rehearsal, except that the amateur, making a rush down the stage, lost his balance and fell over into the orchestra, with his head into the bass drum, and his heels into the big fiddle, out of which he was boosted by the leader and stage manager.

Night came, and with it, as usual, as soon as the doors were opened, the rush of Corkey's street pals and friends for the gallery front seats.

There was the regular uproar, and tramp, tramp, of the audience, and the banging, tooting and sawing of the overture by the orchestra, and on the stage the rushing to and fro, and the hammering and swearing, without which it would be impossible for the curtain to go up.

The prompter was at his post, the actors all dressed and mumbling over their parts. The amateur, looking pale despite the paint upon his face and with a nervous twitch of his eyes which tickled Corkey hugely, was trying his level best to make everybody believe that he was as cool as a cucumber.

"Wot a puddin' he'll have of it!" said Corkey to Johnny, as the pair of them stood at the wings.

"Wot a big slice of it they'll all git 'fore the show's out," replied Johnny.

"All ready," bawled the prompter:

"All ready—ring up."

At that moment Pizarro and Ataliba were crossing the stage to get off before the curtain went up.

The prompter gave a jerk at the curtain bell and in two seconds—just as Pizarro and Ataliba were at the center—a trap yawned open under their feet and down they tumbled, neck and heels.

Corkey roared and then choked with delight.

"Two men's tumbled into er trap," said the call boy, rushing up to the prompter.

"Traps—thunder! There's no traps in Pizarro."

"But Pizarro's in a trap," repeated the boy.

Again the prompter jerked the bell knob, and then up rushed a man from under the stage.

"Why didn't you tell me traps was to be used, before you rung the bell?"

"I didn't," said the exasperated prompter.

"You did?"

"I say I didn't."

"Derned ef that prompter isn't crazy er drunk er both," growled the trap man, as he turned away.

"Cussed ijit," said the prompter, as he put his mouth to the speaking tube, to tell the leader to put on a little more music till he could get the curtain up.

Now, at that instant, the leader at his place in the orchestra was just leaning his face, and the bosom of his fresh boiled shirt up to the mouthpiece, at his end of the tube, to ask the prompter why the curtain didn't go up.

The prompter got his mouth to the tube first, and opening the whistle, gave a fearful blow and the next thing the leader knew his face and shirt were covered with blackness.

The pulverized charcoal which Corkey had entered in the tube did its work effectually, and the blast of the prompter sent it kiting.

"Godelmity!" exclaimed the leader, starting back so suddenly that his chair upset and let him over backwards and down upon the second fiddler and the trombone blower, carrying them both to the floor with him.

The gallery boys in the front seats howled and shrieked and hid, and those behind them pounded on the benches with their heels.

Then the orchestra players, as the leader scrambled to his feet, and roared as he rubbed his face, and the harder he rubbed it the blacker it became.

The leader rushed down under the stage, and stumbled up the dark stairs to the prompt place.

"Gott em der himmel—vot is dish dam fool you makes mit me?" puffed the leader, "mit dese plackness!"

"Histe that curtain!" shouted the prompter, wild with excitement, looking up towards the flies in the upper regions.

The curtain man at length took in the situation and "histed the rag," just in time to give the yelling audience in front a full view of more fun in a stage carpenter, red with excitement and wrath, wrangling and having it out with the Persian high priest, and seeing them make a frantic bolt for the wings.

"I ton't want dese tam nonsense mit me no more," cried the blackened leader. "Dunder un' blitzen, look at mine shirt bosom!"

"Oh, git down to your fiddle," snarled the prompter, who felt like knocking somebody down.

The leader returned to the depths below, and the play went on.

Pizarro and Ataliba, who had by this time recovered from the effects of their fall, were vowing vengeance and trying to mumble over their parts at the same time.

The excitement subsided, and until the close of the first act everything went on smoothly, to the intense disgust of Corkey.

He was bound that things shouldn't go smooth, if he could help it.

When the time came to ring down the drop, the prompter pulled the right bell knob, but as it was fastened to the wrong wire instead of the "drop," down came the painted semblance of a country tavern, with "cakes and beer entertainment fro man and beast."

This made Rome howl in that region.

The stage manager and the manager went for the prompter.

"Go for 'em bald-headed," said Corkey, waving his leather-headed spear.

"You's drunk; full as a goat!" shrieked the enraged manager, shaking his fist in the wretched prompter's face.

"He had 'em all night!" suggested one of the actors.

"I'm as sober as ever I was. I don't know what to make of it. The devil's in the place, I believe."

"Ring down that curtain!"

"Drop something."

"Better drop on himself," said Corkey, putting in his oar.

"He's had a drop too much already," said the property man.

"I tell you," began the prompter, ready to tear his hair out by the roots.

"Shut up; put down that book and go off somewhere and get sober. I'll try this thing," said the stage manager.

Corkey came to the prompt place and pretended with great show of innocence to be looking at the knobs and wires which had caused all this general set and uproar.

"Say, Mister," he said to the stage manager, "how'd it do," then he put his finger into the hook of the bell pull under which was the word, "traps," to pull this here hook?"

"Git away from there," said the stage manager, "you infernal idiot, or I'll kick you into the orchestra."

Corkey did get away, but not until he had given the "trap's" wire a pull.

"You go shoot yourself," said the stage manager.

"You're perty well shot now, old feller."

Presently the prompter, his eyes resting upon the wires and knob, made a discovery.

"Why—why, see there—no wonder nothin' 'd work. Somebody's been changing the wires!"

"Oh, he's got 'em awful!" said Corkey, trying to look sad. "Never saw a feller have 'em so sudden."

The prompter, now that he had by chance noticed the change in the wires, very speedily got them all right.

Up went the curtain and on went the play.

Then they came to the grand altar scene where all the priests of the sun and the priestesses meet in solemn conclave to celebrate their religious rites.

Now the scene was going on in front of a wood flat in the first grooves while the stage was being set for the invocation business.

"Bring along the altar-piece; there, that's right," said the property man. "Get the braces to hold it up."

The altar-piece was found, but "nary" a brace was visible.

"Blast it, where are all those braces?"

Corkey stood looking on and grinning.

"Stand it up agin suthin'," said Corkey.

"By George, I've got it," said the bothered stage carpenter.

Up came the prompter—"Come, hurry here. I'm goin' to change the scene. All ready?"

"Hold on till we fix this altar-piece!"

Then came the stage manager. "What in thunder's the matter?" The matter was explained to him.

"No stage-braces to hold that altar-piece up, eh? Mutton-heads!"

"What's to be done?" whined the stage carpenter.

"You're to be done—to-night," growled the manager.

By this time the supes, priests and some of the priestesses were gathered, awaiting the change of scene, and looking on at the fix the carpenter was in.

"Theer's a bar'l in the entrance. Git it out here, and stand the altar up agin it," said the property man.

"Do anything," said the manager, in despair.

Already had the prompter whistled for a change of scene.

The gallery boys were cat calling, and the audience stamping with impatience.

The barrel was brought out to center of stage, and the altar-piece leaned up against it.

"There, that'll do; now then, where's the fire wire?"

This was a long and very small wire extending from the flies, down which, when fastened to the altar, came the ball of fire supposed to be the answer of the gods to the invocation of the priests.

The ball of fire was only the neck of a bottle with a bunch of cotton saturated with spirits of wine or turpentine, and which being lighted above at the proper moment, slid with lightning speed down the wire, striking behind the altar.

The bottle neck was all ready; the wire hung dangling down from above, and nothing remained to be done except fastening it to the altar.

Then it was too late to waste time in fasten'g the lower end to the altar in the usual way.

"Here, you," said the perspiring stage carpenter to Corkey, "you get into this barrel and hold the end of this wire."

"Not much," said Corkey; "take that little fellow over there," pointing to a short, dumpy supe, against whom he had a special spite.

"Git in here, quick," and the carpenter collared the short, dumpy supe, whose head was ornamented by an immense white turban; "git into this barrel."

The supe, much against his will, got into the barrel.

"Picked pork," said Corkey; "pack him in tight an' pour on the brine."

"Shet up, Cork."

"Now, then, catch hold of the end of this wire and keep your eye out, and when the bottle neck comes down, jest catch above it, and let it drop to the flies behind the set piece. D'ye understand?"

The dumpy chap in the barrel took the end of the wire in his hand and said he knew what to do.

"Change the scene."

And it was changed. All looked serene.

The music struck up and on came the grand procession of Peruvian priests.

And Virgins of the Sun, and Ataliba and Rolla.

The audience quieted down, watched the proceedings in silence.

Presently, while the priests were chanting their invocation, the prompter gave the signal for the bottle neck to be lighted, and let go by the man up in the flies.

The dumpy little supe holding his end of the wire, when the scene opened had found a peep hole in the canvas of the altar-piece, and standing up, put his eye to it, and had a fine view of the proceedings in front.

He became so deeply interested in what he saw, that he forgot all about what he was to do, or in fact, that he held the wire up in his hand.

"Give praise, give praise. Our gods have heard," chanted the priests, and Virgins of the Sun.

"Let her go," said the prompter, looking up to the man above, who was waiting for the signal.

Down came the burning ball and it struck the supe's hand at the end of the wire, and he fairly yell-



"It's fits," cried the grand duke, dousing the wretched Legs with a pail of whitewash, in mistake of water.

ed, gave a bounce up so suddenly that over went the altar-piece and over went the barrel with Dumpy's legs and part of his body in it.

The blazing turpentine ball, when it struck, was, with the sudden jerk of his hand, thrown up, and fell upon his big turban, and over that the fire spread, making his head look like a balloon on fire.

He rolled howling down the stage toward the foot-lights.

The audience roared, and the gallery boys were frantic with delight.

"Put him out!" shouted Corkey.

"Fire! fire!" bawled Ataliba.

The women on the stage screamed and ran off.

The dumpty supe managed to get out of the barrel with his blazing head and roaring "put me out—put me out," ran wildly about the stage and then bolted off behind the wings.

The tumult in front was terrific; the uproar on the stage and behind the scenes was a mixture of swearing and laughing.

The amateur Rolla, pushed and hustled about was frightened out of his wits, and he inwardly vowed that this should be his last appearance on the Bowery stage.

"Ring down the curtain."

"Run on the flats in front."

"Cursed nice work this!"

"Big thing for Eumpy!" said Corkey.

Corkey and Johnny ran across the stage after Dumpy. He had in his fright ran his burning head bang through the side of a painted house.

Corkey caught him, pulled him out while Johnny grabbed up a pail of water and doused the whole of it over the victim, and then Corkey pulled him down and he and Johnnie rolled him over on the stage, "to put the fire out and keep 'im from blisterin'," as Corkey said with a grin.

That last scrape killed the play for that night. The audience cat-called and geyed everybody on the stage and it might as well have been a pantomime for all anybody heard of Rolla's or anybody else's speeches.

"Ef we haven't had a high old time this night," said Corkey, as he went up to his dressing-room, "then I don't know what fun is."

CHAPTER III.

"AIN'T you 'feared of gittin' fired out of the theavter, Corkey?" said Johnny next morning as the pair of them, with one or two others of the boys, sat on the

doorsteps of a house on Elizabeth Street, near the stage entrance.

"How kin they? I ain't no snoozer to give 'em a chance. 'Sides, cully, they don't know nothin'," answered Corkey. "They'll fine yer half yer wages. Them managers is allays doin' that, cos that's the way they makes up for wot the box office feller knocks down and gits away with every night."

"Water you givin' me," said Corkey; "how kin they fine a feller wen they don't give him nothin' an' he ain't worth nothin'?"

"Fixin' them bell wires was a big thing. My eyes, but didn't that feller look sick wich took a header down the trap wen he thort the curtin was goin' up!"

"Yes, and Johnny, wasn't that prompt fakir kinder snow behind the gills wen the stage manager bounced 'im. Oh, no, maybe he wasn't; and, maybe after the show was out he didn't git blind, bilin', stavin', chuck full of gin an' beer? Oh, no!" and Corkey winked his eye in such a queer old fashioned way that all the other fellows laughed heartily.

"Hez enney of you fellers seen Limsee?" said Johnny.

"Limsee's a duffer. He ain't no good; wus'n a raw peanut," answered Corkey.

"Wot's the row 'tween you an' him?"

"There ain't no row, cos I don't hav' no rows with duffers an' gutter snipes. I jest swat 'em over the ground an' leaves 'em a chewin' the curbstone. Limsee went back onto me an'—"

"There he is comin' 'cross the street."

"Who keers?" said Corkey. "I ain't skeer'd fur a cent. Taint my day fur bein' skeer'd."

Limsee by this time was close enough to the party on the steps to hear whatever was said.

He did hear Corkey's last remark, and was evidently under the impression that it specially referred to him.

Limsee was two sizes larger—slop-shop measure than Corkey.

Limsee was a retired supe for the time being, and was now assistant shouter to a vegetable vender's cart, which he considered to be half a dozen notches above the supe line.

So he cocked his ragged old hat over his left eye, and putting both open hands up to his mouth, screamed derisively.

"S'ure-fine tatets!"

"Who's yer callin' a tater!" said Corkey stretching up and glaring at Limsee.

"S'ure ripe tom-a-to!" replied Limsee adding thereto a shrill whistle.

"Yer a snoozer, you air!" retorted Corkey, stepping down upon the pavement and facing the high-toned Limsee.

"You'se ain't nothin' but a second-hand supe—the wust I ever saw!"

"Go for him!"

"Black his eye!"

"Lift his ear!"

"Plug 'im in the smeller!"

These were the sentiments of the council of war on the stoop.

"All you'se fellers air goin' to pitch, air you? Nice lot of muffins you is! Tom Biggs, give me back that knife you borried of me, and Joe Peeper hand over them two cents you owe me fur gittin' 'tween you and that cop wat wus reachin' fur you, an' then you kin talk. I ain't goin' to fight a hole army of sich dead rabbits, not ef I kin help it. I kin lick anyone of you'se in!"

"Kin you!" said Corkey, "yure my fishball. Come on, Mic Duffer, fur one or both of us the time has come to holler enuff."

Corkey struck an attitude and put up his fists. Limsee braced himself, and the rest of the boys made a ring.

"No hitting 'b'low the belt."

"Call them briches a belt? them's his colors."

Limsee's ragged pants were variegated with a panorama of patches so thickly that it was hard to tell where the old pants began or the patches ended.

"Time!" cried Johnny.

"Now then, duffer, look out fer yurself."

Corkey danced about with his fists put up in regular ring style, and Limsee did the same, each seeming to wait for the other to hit out, until the crowd became uneasy.

"No shenanigin!"

"Yer a couple of snides!"

"Ones afeard, an' tother darsent!" put in Johnny.

Presently Limsee did strike out—whang! for Corkey's smeller.

But he didn't fetch it. Corkey dodged nimbly one side, and Johnny, standing close behind him came in for the blow. Limsee's fist took him, square in the cheek, and Johnny sat on the pavement for repairs.

Then the boys roared.

When Limsee, half losing his balance by missing his aim, partly turned to recover himself, Corkey took the chance of slinging up his foot and gave Limsee a lifter.

"Phew! kickins!"

"Foul!"

"Pitch in, Corkey; give to him, rough and tumble."

They rushed in and closed.

Corkey had just got Limsee by the hair, and Limsee had got a grip at Corkey's neck, when a man, push-

ing the crowd aside, reached out, and taking Limsee by the arm, gave him a yank that whirled him around like a top.

"You young scoundrels, wat are you doing here?" "Ef I was as big as you, you'd find out," said Limsee, trying to shake himself loose from the man's grip.

Corkey knew the man. It was one of the utility actors of the Bowery, whom the supes called Tipup, and Corkey didn't like him.

Quick as thought Corkey saw a chance to kill two birds with one stone, and not be known as the killer. He whispered to Johnny who was rubbing his cheek where Limsee's fist had struck it.

"Johnny, yonder's a cop comin' round the Bayard Street corner. You run tell him this big fellows' tryin' to beat us fellers cos we was a sittin' on his doorstep."

Johnny didn't stop to hear any more of that. Off he went, met the policeman, told him with an awful show of truthfulness a worse yarn than Corkey's.

Up came the policeman fiercely, and put his hand on Tipup's shoulder.

"Here, what's the row? Is this the feller?" "That's him," said Corkey.

"I've been lookin' fur you sometime," said the policeman. "Nice one you are—beatin' a lot of hard-workin', innocent boys just 'cos they are sittin' on your doorstep. I know that house. I've been watchin' to pull somebody out'n it, so now you kin come along easy or I'll club you clean to the station!"

"But, Mr. Officer—it's all a lie—these young whelps —"

"I'm a liar, am I? Now your goose is cooked. Come along."

"An' Mister Cop," said Johnny, "that feller," pointing to Limsee, "was a helpin' him—he cum up at us 'fore the man did."

The policeman grabbed Limsee.

"Come along, both of you; and you boys come along—and tell your story to the cap'n."

In vain did the unlucky Tipup try to explain. The policeman had a procession behind him, and he wasn't going to lose this chance of being seen doing his duty.

Corkey and Johnny kept up close behind the policeman and his prisoners until they turned the corner of Bowery and Bayard, then they skipped out.

"Wasn't that high, Johnny, eh? Wot a fool that cop is."

"Them cops don't know much no how. Wot'll they do with 'em."

"Skeer the daylight out of 'em an' let 'em go," said Corkey, grinnin'. "But see here, Johnny, it's rehearsal time. Let's git back to the theayter an' see 'ef we can't skeer up some fun."

"Air yer got any mopuses, Corkey?"

"Nary a nickel. I'll make a raise afore night, 'er I ain't Corkey."

"I've got ter fetch that Carry Gander's baskets home fer her after 'hersal's over—that'll be a quarter."

"Ef you gits it—an her name ain't Carry Gander, it's Corryander."

"Hain't no diff bout the name's long's she tips up the spuds."

By this time they had reached the stage-door.

"Ther ain't any letters here fur me air there, er any packages of jewelry, is there?" said Corkey to the old doorkeeper, who sat smoking a short pipe near the little stairway leading up to the stage.

"No, but I've got a club fur you ef you don't git along lively," said the doorkeeper.

Corkey dodged past him and up to the stage, followed by Johnny.

In one of the entrances Corkey suddenly stopped.

"Look yender, Johnny," he exclaimed. "I'm derned ef that Legs isn't buzzin that second row gal I mashed last week."

"That's the new feller that's chinning with our cappen—run 'is hed through a flat the fust night he went on, an' got flattened out under the curtain-drum."

"I'll flatten him out 'fore he knows wat's wat," said Corkey. "Jest you wait an' see 'f I don't. Nice feller, he is. As if Molly wanted a feller all legs an' a peanut head a chinnin' her."

Corkey stood and looked at them a minute or two, and then, leaving Johnny, went around behind the flats at the upper entrance and came down on the other side close to the new supe and Molly, who appeared to make up for any lack of beauty of features by her liveliness of action.

The long-legged supe was evidently trying his level best to "mash," and to all appearances she was enjoying the fun amazingly.

Near them were two or three other ballet girls, who were having a private chat.

Corkey got behind the wing against which his rival was leaning and listened.

But the noise of rehearsal and a pounding or hammering at the back of the stage by the carpenters, prevented him from catching more than a word or two.

He only heard her say, "You'd better tell Corkey that," and heard him say, "Corkey's a lunkhead."

"I'm a lunk, am I? We'll see, my fine fellow, what I am," gitted Corkey, twisting his lips and doubling up his fists. "Ef it wasn't fur 'hearsal I'd yank one of his long legs off an' beat him with the spiled end of it. I kin wait 'til night."

Corkey slipped away. He did wait till night, but before then Molly told him what the new supe had said, and that he had made violent love to her.

Now this new supe was a favorite of the captain of supers, and at rehearsal was given all the nice little bits of business on the stage. This night "Legs" was to be the lieutenant of "Balbaroni the Bloody Brigand," the hero of the "thrilling melo-dramatic spectacle" now being played in the principal theaters in Europe, Asia and Africa with unbounded success.

To be sure "Legs" would have nothing to say; but he had a drinking scene in which, at a table, upon a wager of a "hundred scudi," he was to drink a full silver flagon of brandy in honor of the boss brigand's birthday.

All he had to do was to nod his head in acceptance of the wager, take the flagon and empty into it from the bottle the specified quantity. This was to be at the back of the stage; while lying about the stage in groups were the brigands, and in front, seated at another table, were the boss brigand, an earl, and a grand duke whom he had captured, arranging terms of ransom, which the boss brigand insisted should be the grand duke's beauteous daughter, who was already affianced to the earl.

Corkey made up his mind what to do. He did it. That afternoon, he, as he had often before, offered his services to help the property man get his properties ready for the night.

"Which is the bottle for the table up stairs?" said Corkey.

"That big one. Them decanters goes on the lower table. Fill 'em half full with that molasses and water; weaken it down a little; thin it out so it'll look like two kinds of liquor. Only one bottle goes on the upper table, and that air tin goblet on the top shelf over there under them pistols—that's it."

Corkey attended to that bottle specially. What he did to it will be seen hereafter.

When night came and everything was ready, Corkey explained to Johnny the little racket he had put up on "Legs," his detested rival.

Johnny laughed all over in anticipation of the fun.

"Won't some of the rest of the brigand fellers take a snifter out of it—eh?"

"No. But s'posin' they do, I aint chum with any of 'em, so wat's the odds?"

The first act went off well enough, excepting that as Legs was going on the stage to deliver a letter to the boss brigand, Corkey accidentally stuck out the butt of his musket just as Legs stepped from the shadow of the entrance, so that the supe stumbled and fell over, spread-eagle fashion, in full view of the audience, whereupon the boys in the gallery howled and shouted in full chorus.

What galled Legs worse than his fall was the fact that Molly saw him go down from an opposite entrance, and when he picked himself up she was shaking with laughter.

When he came off he looked for Corkey and found him.

"What'd you trip me up fer?"

"I didn't," said Corkey. "Hain't you got eyes? Ef you have you might a knowed you couldn't kerry the butt of a musket off on yer foot."

"You stuck it out on pupus."

"Ef I did wat'd yer git in the way of it, fur?"

That ended the argument, and muttering, "I'll see 'f the cap'n 'll 'low this sort of tricks," Legs went off up the stage.

Corkey was one of the brigands in the drinking scene, and with the rest was lying upon the stage in a picturesque attitude when the front flats were drawn off.

Before being a brigand he had been on that night as a priest, a lackey of the grand duke, a peasant, and a soldier in pursuit of brigands.

The scene began. At the upper table in the shadow of a great rock sat Legs, the lieutenant on one side, and a big super brigand on the other. On the table was the big bottle and the huge tin goblet.

"Do you take the wager, Guiseppe?" said the big brigand.

Legs having nothing to say nodded his head.

"Mind you—the flagon full in honor of our captain's birthday!"

Another nod from Guiseppe Legs.

"By'r ieddy, if you win, the scudis are yours."

The big brigand, with a melo-dramatic flourish, poured out the supposititious brandy into the costly tin flagon.

All this while the orchestra had been sawing away the regulation drinking music.

Corkey was watching with an anxious eye the motions of Legs.

According to instructions at rehearsal, Legs took the goblet in his long fingers, lifted it with great display of dignity from the table, and slowly raised it to his lips.

"He drinks a full flagon in honor of our captain's birthday!" said the big brigand, in a loud tone.

"Guiseppe drinks long life to the noble captain," repeated all the brigand: in chorus, as per order.

"And Legs is gittin' the wust of it," muttered Corkey in addition.

Legs opened his lips and a portion of the fluid filled his mouth at the first swallow.

With a yell of pain and his face twisted out of shape, so it looked like a bunch of fish worms, Legs dashed that tin goblet upon the stage, when it struck a reclining female brigand full in the face, which made her scream "murder" at the top of her voice.

Then Legs, still roaring, ran down the stage and plunged headlong over the brigands, who, in their astonishment was getting up.

"I'm pisened I help I help I murder I'm pisened!" he yelled hoarsely as if his mouth were filled with flour. "It's burning me insides up!" Then he dropped upon the stage and rolled over and over.

Then came the uproar in front, and everybody on the stage in confusion rushing to and fro, and nobody doing anything.

"Run down the curtain!"

"Take him off. He's got 'em bad," said the boss brigand.

"It's fits; douse him with cold water," sputtered the grand duke, rushing off and grabbing up a pail of whitewash in mistake for water, and rushing on, dashed the mess over the wretched Legs.

Then everybody roared with laughter.

"Roll him off," said the earl.

"Hydrophobia!" bawled Johnny in sheer mischief.

"Guess he wont call me a lunkhead more'n once more," grinned Corkey, as he stood quietly by a wing looking on at the fun.

Finally the prompter was compelled to ring down the curtain, which he did just as the stage manager had put the mysterious bottle to his nostrils, for the purpose of finding out what was in it, and set it down again.

Then they picked up Legs and led him off to the supes' dressing-room.

A doctor came, was told what had occurred, and he asked to see the bottle.

It was brought in by Corkey. The doctor poured out some of the contents in a glass and put his tongue to it.

Then he laughed and said, "Oh it's only a trick—theres nothing in it but tincture of cloves, alum and vinegar. Give him a swallow or two of water."

"That doctor's got it down to a spot," whispered Corkey to Johnny. "That's what I mixed in with the molasses and water. It cost me ten cents, but the fun's wuth it."

"You bet it is," said Johnny.

That night the property man got a fearful setting down from the manager, but the property man succeeded in convincing the manager that it must have been fixed by some of the other supes.

In the excitement, the property man had forgotten the fact that Corkey had assisted him that afternoon.

Which was lucky for Corkey.

When Legs went home that night, he faintly informed his friend, the captain of supers, that he guessed "he wouldn't try supeing it anymore. It keeps a feller up too late of nights."

As he passed out Corkey asked him "if he didn't want to see Molly before he skipped."

"Mollie be —"

"Shet up, er I'll paste yer eye and poultice your mouth wus'n the whitewash and goblet did! Git!"

Corkey was satisfied with that night's work.

The play was concluded in peace.

CHAPTER IV.

"HERE, you stuffed stick!"

"Who's yer callin' a stuffed stick, say?" retorted Corkey, looking around to see who the speaker might be.

It was the low comedian of the theater, a short, pudgy, solemn-faced man, with a scar over his cheek, and a cock eye.

He was standing in one of the upper entrances, and Corkey had just passed him.

"Oh, it's you, is it, old gripsack?" added Corkey, when he saw who the questioner was.

"Yes, and a little impudence from you'll go a great ways."

"Oh, sherry yer ribs and lem'me alone."

"See here, Corkey, where's that little squeezed-up herring you travel with, that Johnny?"

"He ain't no herrin', nor I don't know where he is," answered Corkey, shortly.

"Well, when you see him, tell him if he don't get my basket down here after this sooner, I'll get somebody else to fetch it."

"You know him, don't yer?" said Corkey.

"Yes, my quisby guy, I do."

"Well, then, tell him yourself—that's all."

"You infernal young leather-headed!"

Corkey snapped his fingers, and went on to take his place among the rest of the supers for rehearsal, without waiting to hear the rest of the low comedian's speech.

"I'll fix that feller. If he sets Corkey down for a blazin' fool he'll get tripped up onto afore he's a week older, if I gits the ghost of a chance. Ef I kicks up much more fun 'bout this shop I'll git fired out, an' that won't bust me."

Meeting Johnny, he said nothing to him about the low comedy man's basket; but he did about him.

"Wot's the bounce for to-night?" said Johnny.

"The boys is jest wild for suthin' to-night, Corkey."

"They kin have it. I've got a feller laid out fur bizness, if I gets a livin' show at him."

"Who is the feller?"

"You'll see—an' so 'll he," was the unsatisfactory reply.



The comedian, when he lit upon the stage fell with his violin under him and smashed it to smithereens.

And that low comedian with the solemn face, did see, and it made him roll his swivel eyes like a duck's in a thunder shower.

That night a rousing old melo-drama was to be done, full of ghosts, blue fire, robbers, dark lanterns and combats, and with a mysterious murder and a lost will as its groundwork.

In this the low comedian had a part—not a long one, but very funny, what there was of it, and on which he could do an unlimited amount of "gagging."

In the business of this part Corkey saw a nice chance to get even with the funny man who had called him a leather-head.

In a scene at the close of the second act the low comedy man was to sit upon a barrel and play a country dance upon the violin while the lads and lassies of the village danced around him upon the stage, which at that special period was supposed to represent the village green.

Corkey was dressed in tunic and tights and was a villager in this act, having in the act before been a high-toned and haughty nobleman with a rooster feather in his cap and a pair of "buff" boots upon his feet, while his face was ornamented with the usual quantity of whitening and cheap Chinese vermilion and an India ink mustache.

From the nobleman to the villager the only change in this costume was in his tights and tunic.

When night came, Corkey looked unusually happy.

He grinned and winked when, in crossing the stage he met the solemn-faced comedian, and took particular pains to ask him if he got his basket all right.

"I'll go for you, you impudent young loose-legged fraud," was the amiable reply of the comedian, who just then was reading his part.

"You'll go for suthin' else, I'm thinkin'," said Corkey, "and you'll go for it hefty."

The comedian didn't hear the reply. If he had perhaps it might have spoiled Corkey's fun.

The curtain went up on time and the house was rowded as it always was when a new and thrilling melo-drama had its first performance. The boys and cronies of the supes were on hand as usual in the gallery.

"Say, Corkey," said Johnny, as the pair of conspirators were standing in a lower entrance, ready to go on—"ain't this a high old piece?"

"Kinder so. Wet makes you say that, eh?"

"Oh, nothin'; only there's sich a lot of rushin' on and off into it. Don't it seem 's though a feller no sooner gets on and says suthin' than he is chased off by some other feller?"

"Jest you wait an' you'll see one feller git off sudden—you bet."

"Here—all you villagers—that's your cue—start on now—more lively, too," said the prompter, giving the supes nearest him a push.

"Who yer pushin'?"

"Go 'long," was the polite answer of the prompter—git on there, or I'll boot the whole gang of you."

It was too late to stop and bandy hard names; so on the procession of villagers went, male and female.

"Hi, look at Corkey; ain't he jist gay?" came a shrill voice from the gallery.

"Hoorah for Corkey!"

"Hi, Johnny, where's the rest of your legs!"

"Silence!"

"Hat's off down there!"

"Stop yer crowdin'!"

"Fire away."

These and a score of other calls greeted the advent of the villagers upon the stage.

Evidently the boys in the gallery were in good trim for any sort of fun that might turn up.

The melo-drama went on all right through the first act.

The second act opened with a grand combat between the poor dependents of the persecuted heir in search of the lost will, and the proud and haughty villain of the piece.

The fight would have been all right had not one of the rattling old rusty combat swords suddenly and unconsciously flew out of the "basket handle." The blade of the sword struck the haughty nobleman in the middle of the back just as he had rushed upon the stage.

"Hold! base minions of a plebian cur! Hold this wretched brawl 'neath our castle walls,"—was what he would have said.

But the sudden collision of that sword blade with his back caused him to exclaim, "Godalmighty! what's that?" and then wheel around with his arm and sword extended just in time to fetch one of the female villagers a fearful whack upon the shoulder.

She uttered a scream and instantaneously dropped upon the stage, and added: "He's killed me!" to the scream.

Then the rest of the female villagers cried out:

"Brute!" and somebody in the gallery bawled out: "Git the ambulance."

"Go on wid de show!"

"Go bag yer head!"

"Go in, old duffer, we'll back yer!"

"Git out yer backbone an' scrape it!"

A large portion of the audience, however, thought the broken sword and subsequent dropping of the

female villager was a part of the play, and so they howled back at the gallery:

"Shet up, up there!"

"Put 'em out!"

"Silence!"

Meanwhile the haughty nobleman, despite the pain in his back, gallantly rushed to the rescue of the down-fallen villager and stooped over to lift her up just as on the other side the heavy villain also stooped over to raise her up.

In the excitement of the moment neither one noticed the other, and the result was that their heads came together with a thump that sent them both backwards.

"You infernal fool!"

"Mutton head!"

As the nobleman and heavy man applied these festive compliments to each other, Corkey came over and helped the girl to her feet.

Then in a moment after the act proceeded, to the intense delight of the boys up stairs.

Then came the scene upon the village green. All the villagers came on, and after a speech from the village beadle, and the utterance of a series of "gags" from the low comedian, which put the audience in high good humor, the villagers called for the dance.

"Aye, marry, a dance it shall be. Come Bertholdi, a dance," quoth the beadle.

"Let Bertholdi make the music for us."

"All right, my lads," answered Bertholdi, (the low comedian). "I'll play ye till me elbows grow rusty."

Then two or three of the villagers rolled on the barrel, while another one brought on a violin.

When the boys saw that violin brought on, they made things lively with their applause.

They had heard the funny man play on the violin, and the manner in which he did always pleased them hugely.

Corkey quietly nudged Johnny when the comedian took the violin.

"Now, Johnny, you'll see what you kin call a regular bounce."

"Corkey, I'm kinder thinkin' we'll git the gran' bounce ef we don't simmer down. Ther hasn't been nothin' but a row since we've bin here, an'—"

"Dry up, Johnny. Jes' you keep yer loose eye onto that pudgy fiddler."

"Now then, lads and lasses," cried the comedian, flourishing his violin in one hand and the bow in the other, "on with the dance."

The barrel stood out upon the stage a few feet from the second entrance.

"Every lad take his lass," was the next speech; "and let every one be his own true love."

"Git in," said the captain of supes.

The low comedian, with another flourish of his violin and bow, started for a run and a jump up on to the head of the barrel.

As it was an ordinary sized barrel, to run and leap upon its head was no very difficult matter, so that the funny man was cock sure of a success in his effort.

"Now, then," Corkey said, in a whisper to Johnny, "that feller'll be thinkin' of suthin' else than callin' me a leather-head."

The funny-man made his run and leaped for the barrel.

So far he was all right.

But when his feet struck square on the head of the barrel the feet didn't stick. They shot out from under him as if they had been fired out of a catapult, and that part of his person usually concealed from the public gaze by his coat-tails came down upon the chime and barrel-head with such a squelch that it fairly knocked a grunt out of him, which was heard all over the house.

"Ughooch!"

The momentum of this sudden collapse and plunging ahead of his feet careened the barrel, as he came down upon it, and the result was that he and the barrel both were upset in a heap, as it were, in the midst of the crowd of villagers, two of the "lads and lassies" being overturned and sent sprawling upon the stage with the unlucky Bartholdi.

The comedian, when he lit upon the stage, fell with his violin under him and smashed it to smithereens.

"Un Gott in himmel, dos ish my Cremona broke in der pieces mit your tam nonsense!" roared the leader of the orchestra, leaping up in his place from his chair as he beheld the catastrophe.

He had loaned the violin to the low comedian, and the violin had cost him "his hootred tollars mit der glit."

That crash went to his soul like a steel spearhead.

"Der fleukter tonpter—oon!" and he grabbed his short crop of hair as if he meant in his wrath to tear it and the scalp off with a single savage jerk.

"Mine leetle feedels gone. Tousand tyfuls, but I makes me bay you fer dese dings," groaned the leader, dropping into his seat.

There was no mistaking this for a part of the play by the audience, and, headed by Limsee up in the gallery, the boys raised a particular pandemonium, while the fifty-cent high-ones in the seats below followed suit.

The low comedy man, after he struck the stage, rolled over, and throwing out his hand, which still grasped the violin-bow, jabbed the end of it into the cheek of the villager as that individual was picking himself up.

In his anger at being thus punched, he flung out his foot and gave the luckless comedian another dose of misery in the ribs.

"Jab me agin, will yer?" he said, as he shook himself up, and rubbing his cheek, glared at the violin smasher.

The stage manager rushed up and down the stage behind the wings, swearing at everybody, and the manager, beholding this last one of an almost every night series of interruptions and mishaps in the performances, smacked his fists together, pulled his hat down over his eyes, and swore to himself that "the whole concern was going to the devil on a down grade of three hundred feet to the mile."

Corkey grinned and laughed, and Johnny almost went into spasms.

"Oh, my eye, what a racket," he said, "what a go!"

"Didn't I tell you?" said Corkey.

"How'd you do it?"

"I jest doped the head of the barrel with grease a inch thick, and then dusted it over so the grease wouldn't show," said Corkey, "an' I know'd that the mint his hoofs struck the head, up they'd go."

"Lord, Corkey, you air the boss! Must I tell der boys, eh?"

"Ef you do yer scalp'll hang in yer dressing-room, Johnny."

Johnny declined the chance of adding any such personal attribute as his scalp to the ornamentation of his or any other dressing-room, so he wisely resolved to keep the fun to himself.

All that occurred occupied but a few minutes of time, but those few minutes were an age of fun for the boys on the stage as well as the boys in the gallery.

The comedian limped off to recover his wind, and the dance went on, without his violin playing, the orchestra giving the music.

Excepting the leader who, lifting his head and seeing through his grief—the comedian limping off—dived under the stage and came up the dark stairs from the music-room just in time to meet the destroyer of his Cremona face to face.

"Ter spitzenbroken! Ter tu de tife! Yer bays for dem gremona mit senuff hornthead tollar tamages," shouted the wild leader throwing his hands up like the arms of a windmill. "Yer have some worts mit de yust ass, mit de biece, by tam!"

"On, Lor', go way! I couldn't help it."

"Wat's dos? Couldn't help shlidin' der barrel off mit de floor. Ish it fur dix, vy you no dake a property fiddle shust to prake up mit your foolery un tam cags?"

"It wasn't a gag; I slipped."

"Yah, yah. Dos is all fery goot, but you bays fur de fiddle all de same."

The comedian began to get mad.

"Oh, go way, you idiotic, thick-headed kroust-slinger! Go take a walk where the soft summer breeze will cool your switzer cheese."

This made that Germanic leader bounce. He shook his fists in the comedian's face, and sputtered and raved in German that he'd smash him with the law clear up "to der Sing Song brison."

At last the stage manager and prompter interfered. The comedian got his cue to go on with his part, and the leader was half coaxed, half hustled back down the dark stairs into the music saloon, where he was presently consoled with a half gallon of lager, sent in to him by the manager.

Corkey felt that night high cock-a-lorum! He was as happy as if he had just been told that Astor had died, and willed him the Astor House and half a dozen blocks of Boulevard lots.

An examination of the barrel, and of the comedian's slippers, which had tracked the grease half over the stage, raised a suspicion in the low comedy man's mind that the trick was the work of some of the supes.

"Let me only find out which of them did it, and if I don't make them bounce! Ouss their ornery picters. It killed my best scene and might have killed me!"

At this moment Corkey caught his eye.

"Maybe you're the young vag that greased the head of that barrel?"

"How dy'e spose a leather-head'd know enuff for that?" answered Corkey with a grin.

"If I thought it was you I'd—"

"Slip up on it," said Corkey, completing the sentence, and dodging off to the supes dressing-room.

"I'll watch that cuss," said the low comedy man, "there's been too much trouble around here lately, for it to be all accident—an' if I do!"

"Everybody to end act!" cried the call boy.

And the comedian made a wry face and said no more, but went gloomily about his business.

CHAPTER V.

"I TELL you wot it is, fellers," said Johnny to the group of supes next day as they sat around on the boxes, benches, and stone steps at the back of the stage a little while before rehearsal. "I tell you wot it is—us fellers had better keep mighty shady fur a while, er we'll all git pitched out. Ther's bin a muss of some sort out onto the stage, most every night since the season began—darned ef there ain't."

"S'pose there has," said Lanky Jim, who always carried the heaviest banner; "wot then. They can't get along 'thout us supes, an' they ain't goin' to fire us out an' put in a lot of unperfeshinal flukes wot'll be skeert inter firs the fust time they gits a sight of de footlights. I say, fellers, wot I'm 'feared of is that they'll dock our wages."

"Ef that's all," said Johnny; "twon't make a diff of bitterness."

"Wot's the reason it won't?"

"'Cos we ain't none of us bin paid nary nickle since we jerked our tights the fust night," answered Johnny.

"Hello, here comes Corkey."

Corkey came in looking as bright and blooming as a dousing under a hydrant spout, within the previous half hour could make him.

"Well, fellers, wat's up? Holdin' a pow wow, or air you gittin up a strike fur more wages so that you'll be sure of gittin' nothin' all the year round?"

Johnny explained the subject of their dispute.

"Let 'em fire us out," said Corkey; "I guess there's other theayters round town where we can git in. And ef ther ain't we kin git up a show of our own."

"Git Stewart to put up a buster in City Hall Park," said Lanky Jim.

"And play Shylock himself on de fust night," put in Johnny.

"That's chin," said Corkey. "But I say, you know the Cap'n—I jist seen him out at the stage door; says us fellers won't be wanted till to-morrow; and to-morrow night I rather guess we kin put a big racket onto that prompter."

"Oh, wat's the use of playin' it on him? He's a good fellow."

"Oh, is he?" said Corkey. "Didn't he raise his boot last night and histe little BobBingler clean off'n the stage an' then grab him by the scruff an' neck him—a kickin' 'im all the while, up the stage and fling him onto a pile of old set pieces over there in the corner? Maybe he didn't, but I happened to see 'im."

"Wot'd he do it fur, Corkey?"

"'Cos he only told the prompter he was a skin."

"Any man's a skin as 'll boot a little feller like Bob. Wy Bob isn't got muscle enuff to box a bed-bug. Wot'd Bob call 'im a skin fur?"

"Wy you see he sent Bob out fur a corker of whiskey, and wen Bob fetched it in down to the prompt place an' he tasted it he found it, was half water, an then he up and at Bob for drinkin' the best part of it, and fillin' it up with croton."

"S that all? Ef I'd got it fur him I'd a throwed it in his face. I say, wot's to be the play to-morrow night, Corkey?"

"Oh, it's some Damon and Pythias, some Hamlet and suthin' else."

"That's a rushin' things, isn't it?" said Johnny.

"Benefit bill, fellers. They're just a puttin' out the two sheeters fur it now."

"Whose benefit?"

"Old Swipes, the heavy feller wot done the big villylans and pirates. Now shall we fix that prompter?" asked Corkey, "cos ef nobody goes in fer it I will, and I'll do it alone."

"Go ahead, Corkey—let her rip."

So it was settled, and the next night the benefit came off.

The last piece, about which Corkey did not know, was one act of a spectacular play, in which a property elephant was to be used; the elephant being made of basket work, the front and hind legs being the legs of two supes upon whose shoulders the body rested concealing their heads and bodies down to the waist. This play was newly christened "The Elephant's Revenge."

The first thing on the bill was the last two acts of "Damon and Pythias."

At rehearsal the prompter directed the supes in their business.

"Now when Damon is on the throne, I want you all in the third entrance, and when I give you the word you must shout all together. Now then let's try it. Get over there in that entrance. Listen to Damon's speech. I'll give you the word. Look sharp now."

The boys, headed by Corkey, obeyed his instructions, and huddled together in the entrance indicated.

They shouted, all together, in good style.

"That will do. Do it as well to-night. Recollect, three times, all together."

Of course they would.

It may as well be stated here that the prompter had about the worst voice of anybody around the theater. It was thin and squeaky, and when he attempted to raise it to a high pitch it was one of those awfully exasperating voices that would discount a mule's any day.

"Who's agoin' ter ride that elephant?" asked Johnny of the captain of the supes.

"Shet yer mouth an' keep yer eyes open, an' I may be yer'll know mor'n ef I told you," was the answer of the captain.

"Wot's that, cap'n; I didn't jest hear wot you said," said Johnny, sarcastically.

"Wat I said I said, an' I don't sell my chin samples twice. Prick up yer ears an' you'll hear more," was the captain's short answer.

"Prick up his ears," said Corkey, who had been listening to the dialogue. "Well, cap'n, ef you'd cut yours off you'd look better."

"I'll have you fired out of here if you give me much of your lip."

"You ain't blunderbuss enuff to do it. Don't yer go to goin' off half cocked, old feller," and Corkey and Johnny left him. Ten minutes afterwards the captain got even by giving a basket boy a "belt over the snoot."

"That cap'n's another feller that's got to have a little racket so's to give him an appetite fur bein' de-cent," said Corkey.

That afternoon the supes, wandering about town posted the outside boys, who all agreed to be on hand and see the fun if they could raise the necessary fifteen cents to "get in the pasteboard."

Night came and the "grand complimentary benefit" began.

Old Swipes the heavy man, opened out with Damon a "celebrated tragedian" whose "renowned personations in tragedy have thrilled the dramatic world of both hemispheres," was the volunteer Pythia "for this occasion only."

Swipes was heavy in voice, and heavy in body, and the volunteer tragedian was thin and sepulchral, and his voice thin and thready as an echo from the too-hoo of a graveyard owl.

The supes were all stationed in the entrance, and ready, as the prompter imagined, to shout themselves hoarse, when he gave the word.

Damon came on, the audience was in breathless expectancy; also the boys in the gallery.

Presently the cue came for the shouting outside, and so far as Corkey and the rest of the supes were concerned, they knew it well enough without a word from the prompter.

But they waited and winked, one to the other, and grinned.

Damon was howling at his topmost gin-and-water tone his long speech, and the prompter rushed up to the entrance.

"Now, shout when I do."

In a moment more, he let out "now then," and shouted, screeched rather expecting his voice would be drowned by the shouts of the others.

But not one of them opened his mouth, and that screech of the prompter was the only sound that split the silence.

It sounded like the solitary bray of a lonely jackass at midnight.

"You bloated idjits, why don't you shout?" cried the infuriated prompter.

The roar of the audience and the screeches and whistles of the boys in the gallery drowned even his exclamation.

"Put up job," growled Damon, in a side speech, as he stood there, facing the audience.

"Please, sir, we didn't hear you," said one of the supes to the prompter.

Damon flung up his arms, and striking an attitude.



"Oh! oh!" cried the captain, coming down on the elephant's back which suddenly gave way, and down it came, legs and all.

again looked off towards the imaginary "westering sun," and went on with his speech.

Then came the signal for another shout.

"Hoorah!" That screech was as far as the prompter got. For when he let it out, Corkey shouted. "Hoor-ror-r-r!" Then after him another voice yelled out, "Hoor-ror-r-r!"

"D-n it, all together, not one at a time!" growled the prompter. "All together, you cursed bullet-headed lunatics!"

"Shout again," cried Damon in his speech, "and again, until old Enceladus!"

"Hip-hip-hip!"

"D-n your hips," shrieked the prompter. "Such another set of infernal wooden heads I never met. Git out of the entrance!"

They got out, and so full of laughter that it gave some of them the headache trying to keep it in.

Some of the actors not on the stage did the necessary shouting left undone, but the audience did not hear much of the remainder of the act.

The way that prompter spattered and banged the supes out of his way and how no one of them got within his reach can readily be imagined.

But the trouble had only begun as will be seen.

Hamlet was the next thing on the programme. It passed off nicely, only there was an exception.

When the player scene came on, Corkey heard the property man call him.

"What is it?" said Corkey.

"It's my voice you hear. I want you."

"I thought it was a tin horn."

"Shut up, you duffer," said the prop faker "take that vial and give it to that man that does the poison bizness—He's forgot it and is jest goin' over—the darned fool."

Corkey took the vial, and as he went or rather hurried around to the entrance where the actor was waiting for his cue to go up on the little platform stage, to speak his little piece, and pour the supposed poison into the ear of the sleeping victim.

Hamlet (the heavy man Swipes) Ophelia, the King, Polonius and all the rest were upon the stage.

In taking the vial around, Corkey at the back of the flat and near the wall, met a supe taking a pitcher of water up to one of the ladies' dressing-room.

A thought struck Corkey.

"More fun—if it works," said he. "Say Joe, give me that pitcher a minit." He took the pitcher and filled the vial with the water. Then wiping it off carefully, he went to the waiting actor, reaching him just in time to give him the vial as he went on.

"Thoughts black drugs fit, hands up and time agreeing," spouted the actor, as he struck his po-

sish—holding up the vial, and in his anxiety to get through not noticing the water in it, or if he did, thinking it was corked up.

"Then mixture rank with midnight weeds collected," and so on until he came to the closing line, "our natural life usurps immediately," when he turned and was supposed to pour the contents in the sleeping victim's ear.

This time he did.

Without stopping to bother himself about what was in the vial or whether it had anything in it he applied its mouth to the sleeper's ear and then—

The water did its work.

That sleeper who ought to have died immediately without a motion or a wink didn't die, but uttered a howl with "dammit" at the end of it, bounced up, to the utter horror and consternation of Hamlet and the rest of the people on the stage, and bolted off after the murderer.

"That fixed his little goose," chuckled Corkey.

That settled that scene.

"I'll discharge every mother's son of you," said the stage manager, gnashing his teeth; "who put that water in the bottle?"

"I haven't the remotest idea," said the prompter; "I give it to Corkey to take around to the—Jimmy who?"

"Where's Corkey?"

"He's over there on the other side."

Around went the stage manager.

"You're Corkey."

"Yes, sir," said Corkey, looking up as innocent as a new born lamb.

"Did you put the water in that bottle you gave to?"

"Lord—no sir—why wasn't there to be water in it?"

"Idiot? no."

"Well, I didn't know. I took it jest as the prop fakir give it to me. Take my solemn davy I didn't see no other feller fill it, an' I didn't let it git out of my fingers till I let Mr. James have it."

The stage manager turned away. "That supe's either a trickster, or else it's the property man's fault."

And then the row ended, but for three days after, that sleeping victim who got the water in his ear, was on the rampage for revenge, but luckily it happened that Corkey's name was not mentioned in connection with the matter.

"Bet yer bottom boots that feller'll cork up his ears next time he plays that part," said Corkey to Johnny.

"And didn't yer jist git out of it by the skin of yer teeth."

"I played innocent lovely, didn't I?"

"They'll ketch yer dead to rights one of these days though," said Johnny; "an' ef they do!"

"They can't do nuthin' but bounce me. an' when they bounce me, Johnny, they bounce the theyater."

"And we're take our patronage to another shop, an' where'll their gallery be?"

"Empty."

The last piece was being made ready, and for the fore and hind legs of the basket elephant, two of the biggest and tallest supes had been selected.

"Now, Johnny—look out and do as I told you."

"Can't you git some other feller, Corkey. I'm too big. Git that little feller."

"No, I won't. I can't trust him. 'Sides you're not heavy. Just you go up back there, where the basket body is, and do as I tell you, and I'll see that you ain't found out, and the feller that rides the elephant is light. The cap'n don't weigh more'n I do."

"If you say so, it's all right, my covey."

Johnny disappeared up behind the flats, where the elephant's body lay.

It was all basket work, and covered with canvas, painted to resemble the hide of the animal.

The fore legs operator worked also the trunk with one hand.

The imitation of a gold cloth hung down at the sides of the elephant—nearly to the knees of the legs, thus effectually concealing the bodies of the two men, who carried, or rather walked it on.

"Come, boys, git into her," said the captain of the supes a few minutes after Johnny had left Corkey. "We're discovered, you know, when the scene changes. Lift it up. Hold on; I'll help you. Darned ef I thought it was so heavy."

He helping them, they got into it or rather got their heads and part of their bodies in.

"Now then, boys, brace up. Billy, give me a boost so I kin git on to its back. That's it. All right. Is it heavy; your legs under them?"

"Thunderin' heavy," cried the fore legs from within, "and I hear another breathin' inside."

"No you don't," said the muffled voice of the hind leg.

"Be steady, boys," said the captain, sitting on the back of the sacred elephant, and dressed as a Hindoo keeper.

Presently the scene opened from each side. Out marched a procession of priests and Bumaportale soldiers.

Then came the heavy man with lofty strides in his great character of *Rajah Ramapoo*.

After a dialogue lasting a few seconds, he waved his hand and said: "Let the sacred elephant come near and hear my decree."

The sacred elephant began to move. The fore legs and hind legs worked to a charm. But suddenly the captain sitting on top gave a sudden start, and said "oooh!"

Then when, to slow and solemn music, the elephant had advanced down the center of the stage three or four more steps, the captain threw out his legs and almost upset the elephant.

"What's the matter with the infernal fool," muttered the Rajah.

"Jemeny blazes!" cried the captain, making a sudden bounce upwards. "Oh, oh," and coming down on the elephant's weak back so suddenly that the whole body gave way, and down it came, legs and all, with captain on top, who rolled off upon the stage.

Then the legs struggled to get loose, and amid the howls of the audience and the uproar on the stage, the prompter, as a last resort, changed the scene and closed in the trouble by running on the flats in front.

Corkey went up to the elephant. By this time the legs had extricated themselves, and the captain was explaining to the stage-manager.

"Fust, sir, I felt suttin' kinder jab me like a pin. Then agin, in a minit it came agin wus and more of it, most in the same spot, and then the last time it was awful, just as if somebody had rammed an ice-pick into me."

"You're drunk," said the stage manager. "The idea of such a thing. You're drunk. Now you git out of here before I kick you plum into the street."

"I ain't drunk."

Just then a crowd of supes came across the darkened back of the stage where the elephant's basket body lay. As they passed between it and the captain and stage manager, had they been looking at it they would have seen Johnny creeping out of the hind leg opening and scurrying across the stage.

Then in a moment after he came down to where Corkey was.

"Didn't I tell you?" said Corkey.

"And didn't I jab that air saddler's needle up through the back of the elephant nice?"

"You bet."

"But it is was awful tight work in there," said Johnny, "and them fellers must have known I was there."

"S'pose they did. They ain't goin' to give you away."

The noise in front had ceased, but when the curtain went down the stage manager was heard to say:

"I'll have a shaking up about this theater before another week or leave it."

"Guess you'd better shake yourself up," thought Corkey.

Innocent Corkey.

CHAPTER VI.

"THINGS have been going on in this style long enough, and I'm cuss if I'll stand it another day," growled the manager the next morning after Corkey's last racket had almost completely demoralized the theater.

"Well, what can we do about it?" asked the stage manager.

"Do? Why, discharge everybody that has had anything to do with it."

"Well, considering that most everybody in the company has had his share in the infernal mix, there won't be enough people left to play a common farce."

"It's some of the supes," said the manager.

"Fire them out, then!" suggested the stage manager.

If he had looked round as he said this he could have caught a glimpse of Corkey, who, coming down behind the wings and noticing the two high officials talking so energetically, had stopped in the nearest entrance.

He had a sort of suspicion that he might possibly be the subject of their "few remarks," which it might be well for him to overhear—if he could.

That little "if" is an awful stumbling block to the plans of boys as well as men. So far as Corkey was concerned, in this instance, he did not stumble over it for a cent.

He had sharp ears—had Corkey.

"Talking 'bout the supes, is he? They're not a good lot to fool with I don't think, old feller," thought Corkey.

"Fire 'em out and get in a new lot of young ruffians just as bad," said the manager. "By Jove, every night this week there's been old Satan to pay. Worst of all, I've got to pay that leader for his smashed violin—a hundred dollars—his 'Cremona' and be hanged to it. I'd give that much to know who greased that barrel head."

Up came the prompter.

"Time for rehearsal."

"Well, call it then. But first call up the supes—are they all here?"

"I suppose so; there's one of them in that entrance, and—here the prompter stepped closer to the manager and whispered: "And I believe he's the cause of all the trouble every night. One of the supes told me as much."

"Oh, ho! He is, eh? Well, I'll tend to his case. Call him up here, and the rest of them."

Corkey was beckoned to by the prompter, and with a comical imitation of the strut of a melodramatic tragedian, came down the stage.

The stage manager glared at him. But so far as frightening Corkey was concerned, he might as well have glared and frowned at a leather-headed spear.

Corkey only grinned.

The rest of the supes were soon assembled—Johnny taking his place as near his crony as possible.

"See here, boys, I have reason to believe, in fact I know that some of you if not all, have had a hand in the accidents which every night this week, have interrupted and once or twice nearly broken up the performances."

The boys looked at each other, and then as if by preconcerted action all looked at Corkey.

Corkey quickly drew down his right eyelid—which meant a wink.

"Somebody's goin' to git bounced," said Johnny in an undertone.

"Now, then," continued the manager as sternly as a judge pronouncing sentence upon a lot of hardened criminals. "It's got to be stopped. I know the ringleader of this mischief; here he looked savagely at Corkey.

Corkey never winced. He was thinking of a way to settle the manager's hash.

"What's your name?"

"Me name," said Corkey, "is Norval Corkey, but my father isn't feedin' no docks onto the Gramplan Hills."

"You impudent vagabond!" exclaimed the manager wrathfully at Corkey's coolness. "Now I know you're the head devil of this conspiracy. I discharge you on the spot."

"Got a fellow spotted, ain't he, old top?" said Johnny to Corkey.

"And that putty-nosed fellow can go with you," added the manager, pointing toward Johnny.

"That don't hurt nobody. Putty-nose's better'n a puddin'-head any day," said Johnny.

"Couldn't give a feller a complimentary benefit, could you?" asked Corkey.

"Get off this stage."

"An' volunteer ter play yerself, eh?" added Johnny.

"Put up the 'Gory Goriller,' an' let you do the goriller."

"Here, Bill," said the manager, boiling over with wrath, calling to one of the stage carpenters, a big, burly man, whose only physical defect was in being near-sighted, "collar these two imps and chuck 'em out into the street."

"Don't bother yerself old feller, we kin hoop it 'thout bein' chucked. This is our chuckin' day, ol' blue pie."

"Shet up; don't aggravate the gen'l'man. He's a thinkin' 'bout doin' the goriller. He won't have to hev' any extry makin up of his mug for it," said Corkey.

"Bill, did you hear me?" roared the manager.

"All right, sir; in a minit," answered the carpenter, pretending to be very busy doing nothing with one of the wings or side-scenes, and really not caring to get the ill will of the rest of the boys, with whom he knew Corkey and Johnny were great favorites.

"I'm goin' to see my lawyer," said Corkey with a solemnity of expression that set the supers upon the broad grin, "an' sue you ter bustin' yer contract, an' maybe he won't slap a conguncshion onto yer an' shet up yer derned old show. Oh, no, of course not."

The manager, savage at being bullied in this manner by a supe, made a rush at Corkey, hauled off his open hand to let him have a sounding whang over his ears.

But he missed it.

Standing beside Corkey was the prompter. Corkey, as the managerial hand swung down with awful force, suddenly dodged, and the prompter's face got it.

Uttering a howl the prompter went backward so suddenly that he struck the table and over it went—and splash, broke the inkstand; the ink sprawled over the manuscript of the new play, and losing his balance, the prompter sat down in the midst of the mess.

A sharp fragment of the broken inkstand happened to be under him where he lit, and uttering an agonizing "Godelmity" he shot up on his feet again, his face looking as if it had been run through a clothes-wringer.

The boys fairly danced with delight.

Corkey and Johnny had got behind the group and so for the moment were out of sight of the infuriated manager.

Bill the carpenter, who had held back as long as he could, now rushed down to obey orders.

"Chuck 'em out!" roared the manager.

Bill, seeing dimly through the mist of his near-sightedness the form of the prompter popping up suddenly from the floor, mistook him for Corkey, grabbed him by the back of the neck and slack of his pants and ran him up the stage and off at the upper entrance as speedily as if his victim had been a wheelbarrow.

"Lemme go, Bill, I'm no—"

"Shut up—er I'll wipe up the floor with you"—said the carpenter, giving him a gentle boost and good-bye send off with his foot, but still holding fast to his collar.

The prompter by this time recovered from his astonishment suddenly turned upon Bill, wrenched himself loose from his grasp, and planted his fist in one of the near-sighted eyes.

"Take that, you thunderin' bleary-eyed idjit!"

The carpenter reached for him, but grabbed nothing; for the prompter knowing the result of a rough and tumble with the big carpenter skipped, as it were, out of sight.

While this was going on the supers scattered up the stage to see the fun, and Corkey and Johnny slipped

around behind a pile of flats, quietly crept from there up the narrow stairs to the platform over the borders and seating themselves upon a couple of kegs, held a council of war.

"Johnny, I guess we've got ter skip."

"Looks like it. But wasn't that a high old racket Bill a-neckin' the prompter up de stage, a kickin' of 'im and then a gittin a crack onto his nigh side peeper—my eye, wasn't it big?"

"You bet," said Corkey. "See here, Johnny, I've got a idea."

"Roll it out bung side up old feller."

"You know his nibs—Dan Jawkins that jitt goin' to start out fer a star?"

"Yes."

"Now he wants a dresser to travel with him—sposin' I goes fur the sit., Johnny?"

"Why, Corkey, you dunno nothin 'bout dressin' a star."

"Don't I. Maybe I don't. I'm goin fer that sit. this very afternoon. I've kerried his basket onct or twice, an' I 'heerd him say that he'd give anythin' 'f he could git a stiddy dresser. Johnny, I'm goin fer it, an' ef I git it I'll fix it so yer kin go with us."

"Us—who's us?"

"Why me and Jawkins—of course."

"He ain't no snide spouter, is he, Corkey?"

"Wat's the odds s'long as he pays. He isn't a Ned Forrest ner he ain't Jim Wallack, an' his voice maybe it sounds like rubbin' a old file agin a nutmeg grater, but that don't make no dif. to me if he pays up reg'lar. 'Sides it's wuth suthin to travel."

"And won't we have high old rackets wid dem country actors—eh?"

"Rayther, Jemeny!" exclaimed Corkey, slapping Johnny on the back. "I've got it!"

"So've I—onto my back. You needn't knock a feller's wind out anyhow. What'er yer got, old crazy?" said Johnny, twisting his shoulders.

"A idea for a big racket to-night."

"Onto this here stage?"

"Of course."

"But they won't let us in to-night."

"Won't they? Leave Corkey alone for that. Jest you stay here till I come back, er else loaf 'round outside the stage door. I'll go round to Jawkins' hotel, and see wot my chances air, an' then I'll be back here. By that time rehearsals'll be over, an' when they're all gone we kin fix things."

"Ke-rect—on de top row—keno!" said Johnny.

"Guess I'll git outside. 'Tain't healthy up here, if one of them managers happens to git up here."

In a few minutes the pair got out without being seen by any one, except the old stage doorkeeper.

"You fellers had better keep shady," he growled as they passed him. "I've heerd suthin 'bout your being bounced this week."

"Hi—crikey!" said Corkey to Johnny. "Dey're hear that? The old duffer don't know we atr bounced. That's good for us anyhow."

"He'll know it afore dark."

Two or three hours afterwards Corkey came back and found Johnny turning flip-flaps and playing circus generally to the immense delight of half a dozen of his younger cronies, on the pavement.

"Bully," said one of them.

"Ef they'd only give Johnny a chance to act up on to a real stage, wouldn't he knock 'em?"

"You bet yer head he'd make Rome howl."

"Er the awjence," added another.

"O. K.," said Corkey.

"Jawkins, dy're mean?"

"Yes, I'm engaged, expenses paid, start day after ter-morrow, new suit of togs, go on with the supes wherever we air, ain't that high?"

"An' wot am I to do?"

"Go with me, you snoozer, I'll fix that. You're my brother, dy'e see?"

"I'm ter be yer brother?"

"In course. Now, Johnny, let's git in onto the stage ef we kin. I'm going to give 'em a good-bye racket 'er bust, to night."

Johnny, after giving his cronies a double cart-wheel flip flaps closing up with a "header" on one hand and knocking his heels together in the air, followed Corkey.

The doorkeeper saw them pass, but said nothing.

The stage was deserted, save by one or two of the carpenters' who were too busy to notice who came in and went out.

Corkey made his way quietly up stairs to the "flies."

It was, as it always is in that part of the stage, hot, dusty and dark.

Directly over the prompt place, he paused.

Johnny was near the great drum or window by which the act drop was lowered and hoisted.

Looking down from here, people on the stage looked like the figures of a puppet show.

Looking up from the stage, the region where Corkey and Johnny were, seemed like a world of ropes, canvas and gloom.

"Now," said Corkey, "I'll show you suthin'. You see that air bell?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the curtain bell."

Here he took from his pocket a ball of fine stout black patent thread.

"Wat 'er you goin' to do with that thread—histe a kite?"

"It'll make somebody go kitin' to-night ef it works right," answered Corkey, grinning.

"Jewhilkika," sputtered Johnny, "isn't it dusty here? Wus'n Bloomindale road on a Sunday afternoon."



"Shut up 'er I'll wipe up the floor with you," said the carpenter, holding the prompter fast by the collar.

"It's this here dust that makes the curtain boys short lived," said Corkey. "It gradually chokes 'em out."

Corkey took out a gimlet.

The curtain bell hung to a spring and the spring was fastened to the thin board partition which, as the procenium divided the fourth tier or gallery from the stage.

From the bell down to the prompter's place far below, ran the wire by which the signals were given to the curtain boys to "run her" up or down.

Close beside the spring and through the partition Corkey bored a hole.

Attaching one end of a double thickness of the stout black thread to the bell spring, he pushed the other end through the hole so that two or three feet of the string hung down opposite on gallery side.

Thus anyone sitting on the seat next the partition, could by a twitch of the cord ring the bell.

"If that won't make fun to-night I'm a nigger, and there ain't much chance of them curtain fellers seein' how the old thing works, either. Now, Johnny, that's fixed, let's git up and git down afore anybody sees us up here."

They got down stairs safely and unnoticed, and were making their way out, when a voice yelled out:

"Here, Corkey."

Corkey looked around. It was the property man.

"Got anything to do?"

"There's another feller wot don't know you was bounced," said Johnny.

"Never mind, it's mutton fer us," replied Corkey.

Then answering the property man, he said: "No I hain't. Wot's yer trouble?"

"Come here and help me," Corkey said yes, and asked: "Wot am I to do?"

"While I'm loadin' up these cussed old muskets, I want you to nail the bottom onto that palanquin. They're goin' to use it to-night to carry off the prince and princess. There's the bottom board, and there's the hammer and nails."

Corkey took hold.

There was lying near, upon the stage, a great sheet of thick pasteboard, such as is used by binders for book covers.

This sheet of pasteboard was as large as the bottom board of the palanquin.

The palanquin was simply a covered sedan chair in which one or two persons being seated were carried on or off by two supes, one in front and one behind.

Corkey "gunned" his job, grinned, and set to work. What sort of work he did will be seen hereafter.

"That's fixed," said Corkey to the prompter.

"All right, my covey. You and your pal there just

run the handles into it, carry it over there into the third entrance and let it stand."

Corkey did so.

"Anything more?" said Corkey.

"Yes."

"Wot is it?"

"I'll show you."

Corkey worked around for the prop faker nearly an hour longer, and then went out.

"Now, Johnny, we must git around to-night, early to the gallery door, and pile in as fast as we kin."

"Pile in it is," answered the cheerful Johnny.

Night came, and Corkey with Johnny close behind him, contrived as soon as the doors were opened, to be among the first to rush up the stairs to the gallery.

The gallery door-keeper knew them both, and thinking they were still among the regular "supes" of the theater, passed them in.

"Ain't you fellers goin' to be used to-night?" he merely said.

"Not if we knows it," answered Corkey.

Corkey ran around the gallery, into which the boys were fast crowding, until he reached the end next to the partition, through which he had bored the hole.

"See," said Corkey, "there's the string. You set down there, Johnny, an' I'll kinder lean up agin him, as if I didn't want ter set. I kin see down onto the stage. An' let me know when that air sedan cheer is brought out."

The gallery was crowded that night, for it was the first night of the blood-curdling "Eastern Oriental pageant of the Heathen's Sacrifice, or the Rajah's Revenge."

The orchestra drummed, fiddled, and blowed through the overture, the gallery boys hi hied, shrieked, whistled, and stamped as usual, and then Corkey heard the curtain bell ring close to his ear where he stood.

He grinned.

The manager standing on the stage at the prompt place, rubbed his hands and said, "now I guess we've got that infernal Corkey out of the theater, things'll run smooth."

Corkey would have grinned still more had he heard that.

The play went on.

Limsee and the rest of the boys in the front seats applauded loudly, and peanuts suffered.

In the third scene of the first act, the great Rajah Ramsplitpootah waved his hand and cried out, "what ho, slaves! bring hither the royal palanquin."

On came two broad-shouldered supes bearing by the long handles, the royal palanquin.

Then the Prince of Junglejah and his lovely prin-

cess made a speech and were answered by the mighty rajah.

"Slaves, bear the prince and princess to our palace by the Ganges, and bear them safely, or by Vishner, your vile lives shall pay the forfeit."

The palanquin rested on the stage.

The prince and princess, with great ceremony, stepped in, and the slaves closed the door, and getting between the handles, stooped to lift up their burden.

Of course the inside of the palanquin was invisible to them.

The rajah waved his hand.

"Onward, slaves!"

Each super grasping the handles, wheelbarrow-fashion, gave a lift and started.

And they had no sooner lifted it and started, than the bottom burst through and down upon the stage came the unlucky prince and princess.

Corkey had slyly substituted the thick pasteboard for the board.

The supes felt their burden suddenly lighten, but not knowing exactly that anything was wrong, tried to go on.

"Stop; hold up," roared the prince from the interior, kicking his feet on the stage.

"Oh! oh!" shrieked the astonished princess.

"Hold up," cried the rajah, with his back to the audience.

The gallery boys shrieked and stamped and laughed, and the usual uproar ensued with the audience.

Finally the prince and princess were pulled out from under the wrecked palanquin, and were obliged to "hoo it," as the prince privately remarked, to the royal palace.

The stage manager "went" for the property man, who had nothing to say in reply to the tremendous "setting down" he received, but inwardly he swore a solemn oath that the moment he came within reach of Corkey, that scamp would think a streak of chain lightning had tackled him.

Corkey, leaning against the partition up in the gallery, roared as loud as the rest of the boys.

The play went on after this episode until the middle of the next act, when Corkey gave the string a quick jerk.

Tingle, tingle, ting, went the curtain bell.

He heard the curtain boys on the other side of the partition rush to the wheel, and then down went the great curtain.

"Histe that curtain," howled the prompter.

"Death and destruction what's got into the infernal theater and everybody in it!" ripped out the manager.

"Are you drunk or crazy up there," called the prompter, as he gave the knob of the curtain bell wire a furious jerk. "Histe her up."

"Wot'd you ring the bell for then?" yelled the curtain boys from above.

"I didn't."

"You did. We've got ears!"

"I didn't."

"You're drunk."

"You're looney."

"Histe that curtain."

Our boys can readily imagine how tickled Corkey was with this fun, which he knew must be going on behind the scenes, and he'd have given all his chances with Jawkins if he could have heard it.

Directly the curtain went up again.

No sooner was it fairly up, the audience quieted and the acting began, again than tingle-tingle-ting rang the bell again.

The curtain boys again did their duty and inwardly believing that everybody below was drunk and crazy, rolled down the curtain.

This was too much.

The manager bolted up the narrow stairs followed by the prompter, and then they and the curtain boys went at it.

"What d'ye mean, you idiots—you—you—"

"What'd you ring for?"

"I didn't."

"You're a liar."

"Get out of here."

Through the partition Corkey could hear this—despite the yelling of the gallery boys, and the noise in the tiers below.

Then Corkey listening, heard a scuffle.

"They're havin' it out," he said.

There was a terrific tearing up of dust and rattling of the boards in the curtain loft.

Then Corkey heard some one against the partition on the other side and directly he felt the string pulled from his fingers.

"They've dropped onto my little game. Come, Johnny," he said, "let's git; they've jerked the string, and ef they catch us up here we'll git the wust of it."

They hurried out, down stairs and into the street.

It was the prompter who, examining the bell, while the manager was punching and kicking the unfortunate curtain boys, made the discovery that by means of the string an outsider had put up the job and upset everything.

"Well, I'm cursed!" puffed the manager.

"There, now then, beat us agin, will yer!" said the curtain boys.

"I know now," said the prompter. "It's that blasted Corkey that's fixed this!"

"D—n Corkey," gritted the stage manager. "If I get my hands on him I'll skin him alive!"

But he didn't get his hands on him.

Next day, Corkey got his new suit of clothes from Mr. Jawkins the "star," and was duly installed as his dresser.

When Corkey told Jawkins about the bell trick, Jawkins roared.

"Served 'em right!" said Jawkins—"but no more of that."

Corkey grinned and thought, "Oh no, maybe not—but I rather guess yes."

Next day the star was billed to appear in Newark.

CHAPTER VII.

CORKEY was not specially sorry that he and the Bowery were to part company, especially as his leaving it brought him a chance of "gittin' outer town an' seein' things," with all his expenses paid and lots of fun.

"Won't we have some gay old rackets wen we gits on the road? Oh, no, of course we won't. We ain't that style," said Corkey to Johnny.

"Them duffers kin have suthin' like peace fur a while onto that Bowery stage—won't they, Corkey?"

"Dunno—ner I don't keer. My eye, didn't we raise 'em, though. If them fellers ever forgets Corkey, I wouldn't give much for wat they'll ever know."

"I say, Corkey, is this here Jawkins a good fellow?"

"You bet, an' ef he don't pan out fur good, I don't keer's long's he kin pay. No feller ain't no good in de perfession 'thout he's got the stamps."

"Kin he act with anythin'?"

"Oh, he ain't no guy—I don't think."

"An you starts ter-morrer?"

"We starts ter-morrer—yer an' me an' Jawkins."

"Wot'm I to do?"

"Jes keep shady, an' don't bile over 'fore ther's a fire under yer," said Corkey.

They were talking as they went along toward the hotel where the great Jawkins was stopping.

Jawkins, after giving his new dresser a sort of rehearsal as to his duties, handed Corkey what he cared most for—a few dollars for "expenses."

"As for that chummy, or brother, or whatever he is, he can go with you on one condition, and that is, he must make himself useful, and not be impudent."

"Ther ain't no danger of that," said Corkey, "he's as innocent as a stuffed stick, sir; 'deed he is. That's why I like him so."

"Very well then; we'll see what he's good for."

Newark was "billed" in the usual flaming style, and Jawkins made his appearance to a crowded house.

The first night everything went off well, and the eminent actor was well satisfied with the result.

So was Corkey, with one exception.

Corkey had constituted himself captain of the supers on that stage, and they didn't like it.

"He's a city duffer. Thinks cause he travels with 'er star, he's a boss super, but he ain't no boss for us," was the opinion of the Jersey party.

Johnny overheard their grumbling that night, and reported it to Corkey.

"Them an' I'll have some fun to-night, and then we'll see who's a duffer. Jest you prop yer eyes up wid a match, Johnny, and you'll see whether I ain't a shark in a shoal of sculpins."

That night Jawkins was to howl "Rugantino," and after that "The Castle Specter" was to close the evening's entertainment.

In the church scene of the first act there was a grand procession, which solemnly marched down the stage through a pair of iron gates.

After tramping around the stage like a lot of hungry ghosts looking for a spectral lunch, they ranged themselves at the sides, and in a row against the back scenes, while the duke and other bigbug Venetians exercised their lungs, and split the air with their speeches.

Corkey had Johnny instructed as to his part of the little racket he had put up on "them fellers."

Johnny was behind the back scene. He was got up as a monk, and was not to come on until toward the close of the scene.

Just as the duke's daughter, *Rosabella*, said, "I know not why, but an unusual dread has seized on my heart—the dead and awful silence," one of the Jersey supes at the back of the scene let out a yell loud enough to drown the noise of a steam whistle.

Jawkins, standing at the wing, ripped out a cuss word of great power and strength.

"What in bloody blazes is the matter?" said the prompter, rushing up behind the wings.

He had hardly got the words out of his mouth before another supe, at the back let out a terrific yelp, and clapping his hand to his rear, bolted in a zig-zag style from the stage.

"Oh—oh—ouch!"

"Jewhilling—o—o—ch!"

The first supe fairly danced for a moment, and made the actor who did *Panizzi* so wrathful that he incontinently grasped him by the back of the neck, and pitched him off at a side entrance, and then rushed down to *Rosabella*, under the impression that in her astonishment she was about to faint.

The audience stamped, and whistled, and hissed, and Jawkins swore more, shook his fists, and gritted his teeth.

Corkey, who, at the outset of the fun had come off into one of the entrances, was standing near his "boss" and grinning all over.

When the terrified supe bolted and zigzagged off he plunged in the entrance when Jawkins was standing shaking his fists.

Jawkins seized that supe by the short crop hair upon his bullet head, and brought him up with as short a jerk as if he had run against a hitching post.

"What in blazes ails you—what's —"

"Please sir—don't—oh—ouch—it's awful!" moaned the distressed supe.

"What is it, you howling devil?"

"Suthin' bit me clean through."

Just then a sape, leaning against a wing on the opposite side, and who was calmly gazing upon the uproar, suddenly and apparently without any reason gave vent to a loud and emphatic "Doddernit—ooch!" and bounced off, throwing down his leather-headed spear so hard that the handle broke.

One of the pieces flew up and seriously discommoded the sinister optic of a high and mighty Venetian count.

"I'm cursed if this isn't as bad as the Bowery," exclaimed Jawkins, taking a tighter clench at the supe's hair. "I've a notion to shake the daylight out of you; bit, was you? You're a fool. Go, get thee hence," and Jawkins gave the bewildered supe a farewell boost which sent him half way through the wing.

"Here, Corkey," said Jawkins, "what's this row all about? Maybe you've got a hand in it."

"Me! no, siree, boss. I kin tell yer wat I think it is—it's one of the games of them Jersey supes. The prop fakir war a tellin' me."

"That'll do. There's my cue. I'll rush on and wake 'em up."

When he rushed on and struck an attitude the audience became quiet.

"Corkey," said Johnny, "did I do it kerrect, eh?"

"Kerrect," answered Corkey, "only you orter've fetched two or three more of 'em."

The secret of all this row was with Corkey and Johnny.

Corkey provided Johnny with a long saddler's needle, with which he was to saunter along behind the back scene and when "Captain" Corkey's Jersey supes were ranged along against the scene he was to jab this weapon of dire torture through the canvas into the enemy.

How well this simple contrivance worked has already been described.

But the general result did not by any means equal Corkey's expectations.

"It orter have been a cheese knife," said Corkey. "Those 'ere fellers are so used to bein' stuck by the 'skeeters that they don't mind a little thing like a needle. Never mind, Johnny, we'll wake 'em up lively 'fore we git through wid 'em."

Next day rehearsal was begun of a new melodramatic spectacle which was to be played for the benefit of Jawkins at the close of the week.

Corkey had the fun, as captain, of drilling the supes into the way of doing things right.

And didn't he worry them!

He marched and countermarched them over and over

again, up and down and in all sorts of shapes and ways he could think of, and in a good many ways no mortal supe was ever drilled before.

They growled and scowled over the work the "city duffer" gave them, and made snoots at Johnny.

From twelve o'clock until four Corkey kept them tramping about the stage.

"Ain't you goin' to let us fellers git away to-day?" said one of them to Corkey.

"Ef you fellers kin learn to do the bizness of this play wich you air to do—you can go. Maybe you don't like it."

"No, none of the fellers like it."

"Then I guess you'd better not make me give yer as much of it. Ef you chaps thinks you've got a city duffer to run over, you'd better be a thinkin' suthin' else. Now then—git in line an' see 'f you can't do that air tripeumpful march over agin."

"We ain't agoin' to do it agin," said the big supe who had spoken before.

"You ain't, ain't you?"

"Nary wunst."

"You won't, won't you?"

"Nixey. We ain't goin' to be nosed about by any such duffer as you, nohow."

"Johnny," said Corkey, "just you run in to the bug-juice shop next door and tell Jawkins that there's a hitch, and that these Jersey gutter-snipes won't rehearse."

Johnny started, and presently in came Jawkins.

"What's the row?" said the starry Jawkins in his deepest tragedy tones, glaring savagely at the gang.

"Please, sir, there ain't no row, only we're tired, and—"

"Tired!" exclaimed the tragedian. "Tired? The labor we delight in is physic's pain."

"We ain't sick, and don't want any physic," said a little supe in a squeaky voice.

"Wot am I to do with these here fellers? They're the wust gripsacks I never did see," said Corkey.

"The very wustest of the wust," added Johnny.

"Silence!" said the frowning Jawkins. "Silence this dreadful howl, or I'll pick one of you up and knock the rest of you down with him. Corkey here is my dresser, and knows what I want. If I hear any more of this row I'll discharge every mother's son of you."

"You ain't the manager," said the little supe.

"Better discharge yourself," said another.

"Better go hire that air dresser out for a bootblack."

"He ain't nuthin' but a gutter-snipe anyway."

"By Jove! this looks rebellious," said Jawkins, "and it's got to be squelched."

"If you'll gimme leave I kin squelch it," said Corkey.

"How?"

"Why, I'll jest sail into their mutton in less'n two shakes of a toothpick. I feller wot can't warm three or four sich Jersey skeeters as them isn't any account no way."

"Do as you like, my lad, I'll protect thee. In the bright lexicon of youth which fate reserves for a glorious manhood, there is no such wor-r-r-d as fail!"

And with a wave of his hand and a magnificent display of strut, the eminent Jawkins walked off and left Corkey to his fate.

"That air Jawkins is chuck full," whispered Johnny to Corkey.

"Yes, an' we'll be chuck full in another way ef we don't git the best of those fellows," said Corkey.

The crowd of supes were moving off.

"Here, where air yous fellows goin'?"

"Goin' off. We're done for to-day, we air."

"You'll be done for the season, or my name isn't Corkey."

"Simmer down, old pot biler."

"Go fer 'em," said Johnny at this fresh insult.

"Go histe yer shirt collar."

"Soak yer ears!"

"Why don't you sail into our mutton?"

"Don't you want to buy a three-legged mule?"

"With herns onto to his head!"

"Pull down your vest."

"Wipe off your chin!"

"Try that march over again."

"Ain't he a nice duffer though?"

Corkey's mad was up, and he made a rush for one of his tormentors, but the rush was a failure.

The supes skipped too quick for him, and before he could show them what sort of a muscle he proposed to waste on them, they were gone.

"If it takes me the whole week to do it I'll lay some of them fellows out," cried Corkey, shaking his fist after them.

"An' I don't think much of Jawkins, either," said Johnny.

"Jawkins be blowed."

"He's a snide," added Johnny.

That night Hamlet was to be played—Jawkins as the melancholy Dane—of course; as "played by him one thousand consecutive nights (Sundays excepted), and three hundred matinees, before all the crowned heads of Europe with immense applause."

"One half of a lie is always believed, and the bigger the lie the more you stuff into the crowd," was Jawkins' motto.

"Johnny, you used to wentriloquy for the boys, you know."

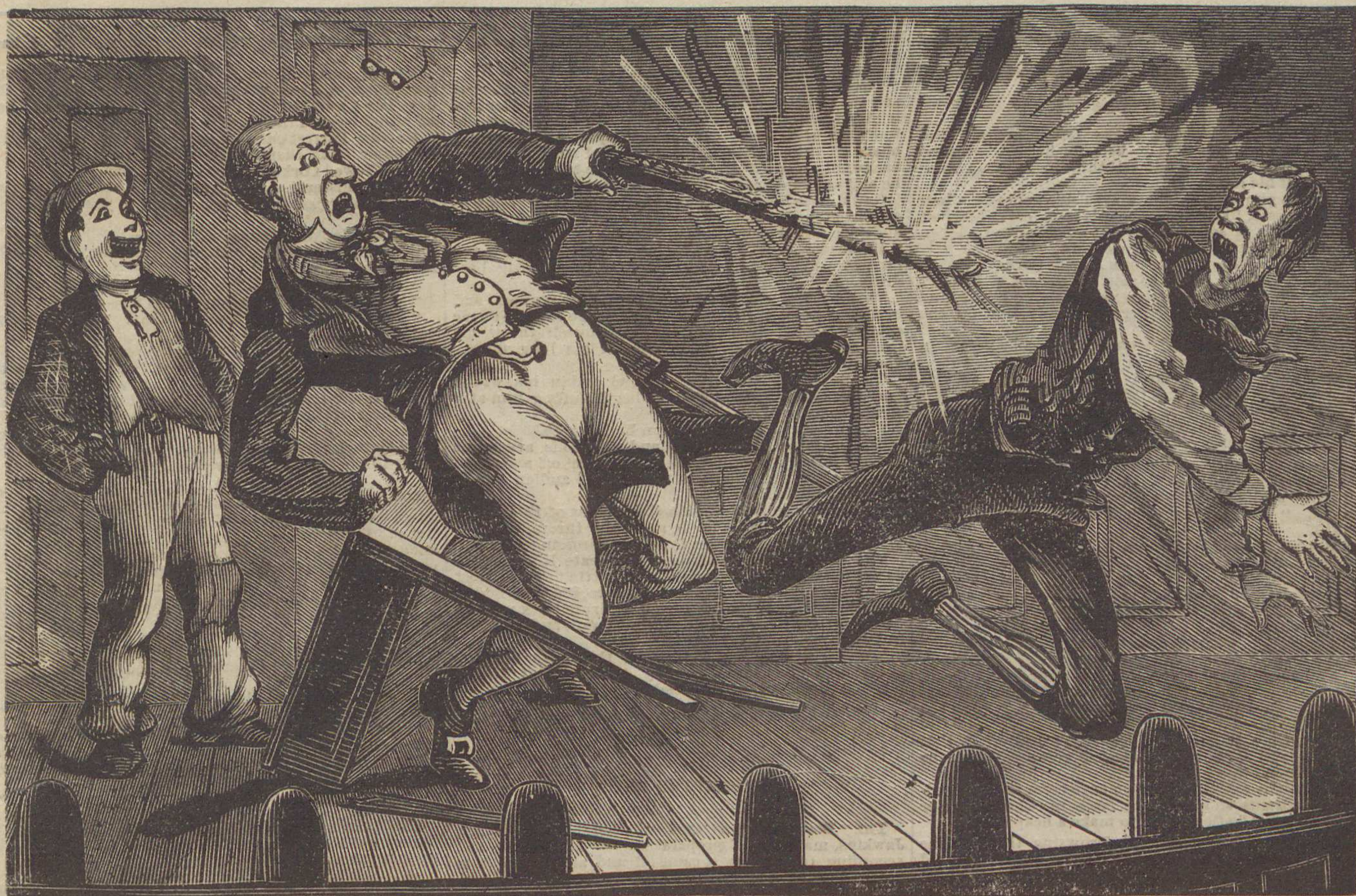
"Wot d'ye mean?"

"Why, like them fellers atop of the stage that makes believe there's dogs and cats and men up on top of the roof and down in the cellar, talking an' barkin' all at once."

"Like Blitz?"

"Yes."

"Well, what of it? Don't mean to give a show on yer own hook, do yer?"



As he brought the stuffed stick with a tremendous whack on the back of the supe, it exploded with the sound of a shot-gun.

"Am I a born ijit? No. Well, then, if I ain't, don't ask such foolish questions. Kin you make b'lieve there's frogs a croakin'?"

"You bet."

"Try it, Johnny, so's I kin tell whether it'll do."

John screwed up his mouth and tried the imitation. "That's it," said Corkey, "that'll work. Now you do what I tell you down under the stage, an' I'll fix the rest of it up on top of it to-night."

As they left the theater Corkey imparted his idea of the racket to Johnny.

"That's just high, Corkey."

"But if Jawkins should drop to it?"

"Guess he won't. Ef he keeps fillin' up as he's begun this mornin' he'll drop himself fore he gits here to-night. An' if he does tumble to it, why I'll put it onto them supes, sure."

When the time came for the performance to commence, Jawkins was on hand. The house was full, and so was Jawkins.

But Jawkins was equal to *Hamlet* drunk or sober, and if by mistake he got it mixed up with *Macbeth* or *Othello*, it made but little difference to the sort of audiences he generally played to.

Corkey and Johnny were as happy as clams at high water—and waited round the wings—after Corkey had got through with helping Jawkins to dress for his part.

At last up went the curtain. *Hamlet* strutted on and off in the usual old tie, wig, funeral style, and the play went on all right until the fifth act.

Then Johnny was down under the stage.

The churchyard scene looked gloomy and impressive. The gravedigger jumped into the grave, and began heaving his pick and singing his little song about a pickaxe and a spade, and throwing up the dirt.

Directly underneath this open trap which formed the grave, Johnny was standing in the darkness under the stage.

On came *Hamlet* and Horatio.

"What man dost thou dig for?" said Jawkins, in his most sepulchral tone.

"For no man, sir," quoth the gravedigger.

"Boo-oo-boo-chug!" came the croak of what seemed to be a big frog, diving into the water.

"For what—in the devil is that?" said Jawkins aside, to Horatio.

"Dunno."

"For what woman, then?" continued *Hamlet*.

"For none, neither," replied the gravedigger—who at that moment perfectly understood the frog business to be a put up job to guy Jawkins, and so made up his mind to help it on.

"Boo roop-boo roop-choo-chug!" came the croak.

"Who is to be buried in it?"

"Boo roop boo-o-beroop chug chug!" came the croak

and the plunge of two or three frogs into the imaginary water.

"Wa-wa-what in the devil's that."

"They're frogs," said Horatio.

By this time the audience which had been so quiet that one might have heard a pin drop, caught the sound of the croaking and began to laugh.

"Good God!" exclaimed Jawkins, getting mad.

"Go on with your speech," whispered Horatio to Jawkins.

"I'm—"

"Boo-oo-roop-roop-boo-oo zit chug!" said the frogs.

"There is a frog pond under the stage," grinned the grave digger.

"Godemity," growled Jawkins; "throw a stone down among em!"

And then bothered by the frogs he began the wrong speech, and opened out with:

"Alas, poor Yorick,—cuss them frogs—I knew him, Horatio; a fellow—for the Lord's sake chuck a stone down there."

Boo-oo-rip-chug!

The grave digger stooped down in the trap, with head below the level of the stage, and seizing Johnny said:

"Git away from there, you young scallawag. That's enough of it now!"

In stooping over, however, he lost his balance, and before he could recover himself over he went from the trap platform, and whang he came down upon the floor underneath the stage.

Johnny skipped for the stairs, and was up on the stage before the gravedigger began to gather himself up.

The sudden disappearance of the gravedigger settled the matter as far as his business was concerned, and completely demoralized Jawkins and Horatio—Horatio being too full of laughter to say anything.

The audience bawled, "Go on! Go on with the show!"

Underneath the stage the gravedigger could be heard swearing the darkness blue.

Corkey had been standing in the entrance nearest the grave, grinning like a clown.

"Guess that'll sober old Jawkins, I'll bet," he said to himself.

The rest of the act didn't amount to much.

The cheap part of the audience amused themselves by boo-oo-ooing and chugging in imitation of frogs, and raising old Cain generally.

The death of *Hamlet* and the rest of it went on little better than a dumb show.

The manager of the theater was raving up and down behind the scenes, looking for some victim to kick or discharge.

When the curtain went down, Corkey went up to Jawkins.

"Mister Jawkins."

"What the devil's the matter with you?"

"You know them frogs?"

"Get out! If you ever mention frogs—"

"It's them supes," persisted Corkey; "them wasn't frogs. They went down under the stage and made b'lieve croak, and—"

"W-h-a-t!"

"Yes, it was them. I just found it out," said the innocent Corkey.

"The wretches!"

Up came the manager. Jawkins went for him.

"Nice lot of supes you've got in this place. By jumping *Cæsar*! I'll not play another night in this theater if they ain't fired out and a fresh lot put in."

But, sir—

"There's no but about it."

"Certainly, Mr. Jawkins. You're the star; but—"

"It's no time fur buttin'," growled Jawkins with one of his fiercest melodramatic frowns. "I am Jawkins and I am a star, and I am not going to stand this sort of blasted fooling any longer," and he strode away muttering, "the idea of the grandest work of the immortal bard being guyed by a frog concert. Damme, it's beastly—that's what it is."

Corkey danced in among the supers in their dressing-room.

"Now, fellows, I guess your goose is cooked brown on both side."

"You be blowed."

The words were hardly uttered before the prompter stuck his head in at the dressing-room door.

"I say, boys, I'm sorry—but—you see it's Mr. Jawkins does it—I'm sorry—but the manager wishes me to say that he shan't want you after to-night."

Corkey opened his mouth.

"Yes, the manager don't want any more frogs about the stage."

The prompter smiled and disappeared.

"Good-bye, fellers," said Corkey, standing in the doorway. "Maybe I'm a duffer but I rayther guess you've got more plum duff then you wanted. Cumm in front to-morrer night, won't yer?"

And he was gone before they could reply.

The boys saw that the "duffer," Corkey, had come the elephant over them, and were therefore awfully wrathful, and breathed vengeance dire and immediate.

If they could have coaxed Corkey out into some quiet spot near a pond, they would have thought as little of sousing him into it, neck and heels, as they might of drowning a cat.

They laid several plans, but one after another gave them up. Corkey had beat them—got rid of them—and

being in the keeping of the star, he had the under hold in the row.

Meanwhile another band of supes was easily secured for the rest of the week.

The new supes were mostly green, and had never been on the stage.

There was one lean, tall, gawky fellow, a great deal younger than he appeared to be. He had a distressed look, as if he had worn himself thin in fighting mosquitos half his life.

He had a pimply face, screw eyes, no eyebrows, a hair lip, heavy ears, like the side-boards to a cart, his hair like a bunch of sea-weed on a pumpkin, and a loose, shambling walk, as if his feet were fifty-sixes.

"He's a nice-lookin' snoozer," said Corkey as he "gunned" him from top to toe. "Derned ef I don't b'leve a feller could make stamps a showing him round the country for a tame goriller what can't live on the land an' dies in the water."

"Wot a noble Roman senator he'd make," put in Johnny, "er a shortcarry pop in Rumio an' Juley. Crickee, ain't he jest gallus?"

"Now, you fellers," said Corkey to the crowd. "Jest you remember that you don't forgit I'm yer boss—captain, and the fust one that don't do as I tell 'im 'll find out wot bounce means."

"Bounce is the word wid the injy rubber into it," added Johnny.

"Say," said the tall gawky chap slouching up to Corkey. "Wot air us to git fur actin' up every night?"

"Nothin'," was the answer.

"W-a-t, nothin'!"

"You won't git nothin' fer actin', and ef anybody ever cuzzes you of doin' it, you kin swat 'im on the smeller fur insultin' the perfeshin."

"We is supes, ain't we?"

"You will be when you learn how,"

"Ain't supes actors?"

"Not since I began chewin' butts they hain't been. Now that's enuff chin music 'bout it. Jest you fellers git in line an' I'll show you wot you've got to do in the new play."

Corkey gave them a good healthy sweat of it that morning, and then at the regular rehearsal Jawkins gave them another.

When night came the performance comprised a howling melodrama and a roaring farce in which two or three "stuffed" sticks were to make a heap of fun.

After rehearsal, Corkey while browsing through the property room, found under a pile of other stuff an old saddle box, in which was a loose pile of Chinese paper torpedoes.

"Regular Fourth of July a feller could have here," thought Corkey. "I wonder where that property feller is?" Near by on the floor lay the empty canvas sack—looking like a big eel skin—of a stuffed stick. All the skin needed was stuffing with saw dust to make it a stick ready for use.

It must be explained to our boys who may not be posted, that these imitation sticks are used on the stage in order to prevent the danger of hurting anybody who might be struck with them.

And they look enough like the real clubs to answer the purpose.

"By jiggers!" said Corkey; "I guess I kin put up a job on that gawk. I've got jest the idea."

The property man came in.

"Young chap, got anything to do?"

"Nothing likely to make me a cripple for life," replied Corkey.

"S'posin' yer stuff some of them sticks, an' help me out. There's a lot of props to fake up for to-night."

"I'm your baboon. Wot'll I stuff 'em with?"

"There's a pile of sawdust down there, under that table."

"Con-sider it done, my lord," said Corkey.

While doing this he took the opportunity to fill one of the long sacks, which was to be used as sticks, and nearly half full of the paper torpedoes. The balance of the filling of sawdust he packed in very carefully, and then sewed up the end.

This stick he carefully stowed away unknown to the property man.

When night came, and just before the curtain was to rise, Corkey drew the stuffed stick from its hiding place, and took it from the property room.

One of the supes was to be on the stage—supposed to be a lazy servant. The savage, hot-tempered old uncle of the farce came on, grabs the stuffed club from a table, and finding the lazy servant asleep, rushes upon him and beats him off at the upper entrance.

When everything was ready Corkey, going gently across the stage, placed his torpedo stick on the table, and carried the other off with him instead.

Then he stood in the entrance waiting to see the fun—the gawky, screw-eyed supe being the lazy servant.

The farce opened. The gawky supe shambled on, half frightened at facing such a crowd of people for the first time, and laying down upon a lounge made a very respectable pretense of going to sleep.

"Jemeny, won't there be a high old bust up," said Corkey.

The fiery old uncle in knee breeches and baggy coat and the wig came on.

"Hal!" was his speech, "confound these lazy vagabonds. They do nothing but eat and drink and sleep." Then he grasped the stuffed stick. "There's that wretched idle Bisky asleep on my lounge. Egad, I'll start him; damme!"

He flourished the stuffed stick and drawing back

brought the weapon down with a tremendous whack upon the luckless gawk.

Then the gawk—oh, where was he?

There was an explosion like the sound of a shot-gun, and the gawk started up and yelling blue murder ran wildly down to the footlights, while the savage old uncle frightened as badly as the supe at such an unheard of thing as an exploding stuffed stick, stumbled backward, over a chair, up against the table, and then he and the table went down altogether in a heap.

Gawk, with his hair standing on an end, and frightened out of his wits by the yells and shouting of the audience didn't stop at such trifles as footlights.

He made a wild desperate leap over them into the orchestra, and bang he lit feet first into the big bass drum.

With his feet stuck fast in this bawling murder, and everything else that came uppermost, he careened over against the big fiddle, and to save himself threw his long arms around it, one clutch of his long fingers yanking the strings out.

The bass drummer set up a howl, and in his wrath grabbed Gawk by the hair and began cuffing him at a tremendous rate.

Then there was pandemonium broke loose.

The manager rushed out and waved his arms, but nobody heard a word he said, and he went off and down came the curtain, and out struggled the audience roaring with delight.

Corkey was so tickled with the success of this racket that he kicked up his heels, and went through a regular high old breakdown in the supes' dressing-room.

The gawk finally making a desperate lunge, broke away from the bass drummer, and getting a final boost from the boot of the owner of the wrecked big fiddle, and a whack over the back from a drum stick made a desperate rush over the orchestra rail, and scudded out at the front of the house.

"Well, I'm blowed ef I thought that feller'd of bin skeert as bad as that. Jemeny, didn't he git up and git!" And Corkey went to bed happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "Boss Actor" as Corkey called his patron, Mr. Jawkins, made great preparation for his benefit, and according to promise it came off, and all Newark was ablaze with excitement; big posters, huge colored pictures, representing a terrific combat scene in the last act, when Jawkins, single handed and with both hands fought and killed fourteen big Indians, three renegades, and leaped from the edge of a lofty precipice into the gulf below,ighting on the back of his fiery untamed steed, and rode off waving his hat in triumph.

"There's a thing like excitement," said Jawkins; "only git an audience excited with a thrilling tableau an' you've got 'em. Dern the plot er yer high flown chin music in a play. What they want is something that'll stir 'em up. A play 'cording to my notion, ought to be like a big dog fight, no talk an' all business—an' then everybody'll rush in to see it. An' that's what my play is—and the duffer that wrote it knowed the trick."

The concluding play was "Nick of the Woods," in which the star did Roaring Ralph Stackpole, and a young gentleman, of Hackensack, made his first appearance on any stage as "The Jibbenainosy."

Now in this Newark Opera wardrobe was scarce at any time. Besides, the manager had had trouble in paying up. During the first play a strange, short, red-faced man had been seen loafing about the stage, and suspiciously near the wardrobe room.

When all the dresses used in the star's play were brought in, the short, red-faced man coolly took possession of the wardrobe, sat down at the door, showed his writ and seized.

Nobody could get a dress for the last piece. What was to be done? The manager fumed and swore and perspired, begged and threatened, tore his hair, and—gave it up.

Meanwhile the officer sat in the doorway of the wardrobe room, and wouldn't let anybody in.

The young gentleman who was to do Nick of the Woods—the Jibbenainosy—had no dress for his part.

"Corkey," said the boss actor—"Corkey, git that gentleman a dress. Fake him up somehow. If he isn't fixed, it'll bust up the play."

Corkey found the "young gentleman" in the green-room looking as woebegone as a broken down hearse in a snow storm.

"See here," said Corkey, "jest you come up to the supes' dressin'-room."

"Sir-r-r!" said the insulted amateur, glaring at Corkey.

"Hev you a dressin' crib of yer own?"

The amateur tried to look indignant, but it was of no avail.

"Lead on poor ghost—I'll follow thee," he said.

"Well, I'm derned," said Corkey; "wot a flat jack he is?"

"He's a koatin' Hamlic, isn't he?" put in Johnny.

Just then the star, Jawkins, came along.

"I say, mister," said Jawkins to the amateur. "My dresser, Corkey, has to fix you off—do as he says. He's dressed the part many a time for me."

"Now then, come along," said Corkey.

The amateur brightened up.

There would be no postponement on account of having no dress.

He was green as Jersey swamp grass, and to him the regular stage, a revelation of wonders. He was in the day-time a swell country counter jumper. But he had ambition beyond the yardstick and scissors.

He saw Forrest once, and heard him roar in "the Gladiator," and that cooked his goose.

He followed Corkey to the supes' room.

"Now, mister," said Corkey, who had fixed things beforehand, "jest let me dress you. D'y'e see them big bootlegs?"

Amateur looked at them with disgust.

"An' that slouch hat with that wide rim. Very well, now then put 'em on."

Amateur looked wild.

"Why, that isn't the sort of dress for—"

"You just put 'em on!" said Corkey. "I'm a dressin' you."

"But—"

"Ther ain't no use a buttin' now. It's most time to begin your part of the show. That air Jibber—Nanersy is sorter crazy feller anyhow, and the wus he looks the better 'tis for you. Now, here's your coat."

Corkey took from the floor in one corner of the room an old rough ulster overcoat, the tail of which would reach to the heels of the wretched amateur.

"By cripe!" exclaimed Corkey, "isn't that just prime. Why, it's just the same sort of togs as Jawkins allers wears in the part. I've seen him in it a hundred times. When yer rippin' round on the stage be keerful an' don't tear the coat cos Jawkins maybe 'll want to wear it in his mad scene in Virginus."

Then Corkey fixed his victim up. With that immense ulster coat, reaching from his head to his heels, drawn in at the waist with a wide black belt and a buckle big enough to cover the top of a table, his legs encased in those boot-tops and his head covered with that wide-rimmed sombrero, he looked ghastly ridiculous.

To complete his mischief, Corkey offered to "make up" his face.

And he did. He gave him a pair of india ink eyebrows like the arches of a bridge, and a moustache that made him look like the grand Turk in a fit of cholera morbus.

Then he put a daub of red on his nose, and on each of his cheeks.

That poor amateur was an awful looking object when Corkey got through with him and told he was "made up just the way Jawkins does it."

The curtain was just going up. In a few moments the call boy was howling for "Nick of the Woods."

The amateur rushed down ready to go on.

Meantime, Corkey to complete his fun, went at work at the band of supes who were to go on as Indians.

One put on a battered plug hat with a short clay pipe stuck in the band. Another found an old turban that looked like a gigantic bird's nest wrapped in an American flag.

Another wore a pair of yellow boots and a swallow-tailed military coat, and another put on a red flannel shirt with the tail hanging out over his pants.

Never did such a hard, uproariously funny-looking lot of supes ever step upon the stage.

"Now, boys," said Corkey, "skip down and get into yer entrances; there'll be a lively time, yer bet."

The play began, and there was a lively time.

When that amateur went on, and came down the stage, Jawkins was in the entrance waiting for his cue.

"Great Caesar," he ripped out when he saw the amateur, "what's that?"

"It's the Jibbernanersy," said Corkey, grinning.

"The gibberny idiot," gritted the eminent Jawkins. "The fellow's a cursed lunatic."

"I told him that wasn't the way to dress the part, but he would do it, sir; and, mister, he told me how to fix the supes up as Ingins."

"The infernal—why he'll make a guy of the whole thing."

Just then a roar went up from the audience.

They whistled and howled with laughter at the awful, looking spectacle of that ulster and broad-brimmed hat moving down the stage.

Even the orchestra playing screeched.

Everybody roared.

The women screamed with laughter.

The amateur stuttered—flung up one hand like a pump handle and stopped.

Only his feet and the end of his nose could be seen.

It was all ulster, and boots, and belt.

He looked like a moving junk shop.

"Goramighty, git off the stage!" bawled the stage manager.

"Git on, boys," said Corkey to his "injuns."

The supes danced on in their plug hats, and other comic traps, and at sight of them the audience became frantic, and the manager fairly tore his hair in his wrath.

Jawkins raved up the stage and down the stage behind the wings, swearing that wretched amateur into the very lowest regions of Satan's dominions.

The amateur amid all this storm in front and on each side of him, frightened out of his wits, stood two or three minutes, and then as if inspired by the sudden jab of a pin, started on a dead run off the stage, when he was collared by the infuriated Jawkins.

"What d'y'e mean you miserable guy, by getting yourself up in this way?"

"Let go of me," he chattered. "It was that dresser of yours did it. He—"



Over went that table, crash, smash went the dishes, and in the middle of the broken crockery down went the manager.

"You're an idiot; a natural born cursed fool. You're—"

"Let go of me." The amateur got his mad up, and in despair like a rat in a corner, turned upon Jawkins, and before the eminent tragedian was aware of it, the wild Jibbenainosy hit him a tremendous welt between the eyes, and followed it up with a side winder below the belt which sent him kiting up against the brick wall.

Jawkins then sat down—slid down—drooped as it were.

Around came the manager, and the moment his eye rested on the wearer of the ulster, he went for him, and the manager in two minutes after did not want to see another ulster again in a year, for he too got a tap on the smeller which sent him piked in a heap backwards through a flat and up against a table upon which were a lot of dishes used in the first play.

Over went that table, crash, smash went the dishes and in the middle of the broken crockery down went the manager.

The prompter, seeing that it was useless to go on with the play, rang down the curtain, and then sent for somebody to go out in front of the curtain and explain to the audience.

There was nobody to go or who would go.

Corkey volunteered.

The prompter shook his fist at him. That was enough for Corkey.

"Hain't I 'pologized fur the manager at the Old Bowery, so-ay? Ef you don't like me git some other feller an' I'll tell 'im wot to say same as they does it over there."

The prompter called up a thin, timid young man.

"Here, Billiker, s'pose you go on. Just tell the audience most anything, and let 'em go out quietly."

Billiker was one of the regular company, and generally did the young lover, and so after pulling up his collar and running his fingers through his hair, said he'd try it if somebody'd see that he didn't get stuck.

So out he stepped, and the audience at once ceased the row to hear what he had to say. They gave him a round of applause.

In the center of the curtain was a round peep-hole used by the people on the stage to get a squint between acts at the people in front.

To this hole went Corkey.

"Ladies and gentleman," began the young lover. "I—I," and he stuck.

Then came Corkey's chance to prompt him.

Through the hole Corkey said loud enough for the young man to hear him:

"I ask your indulgence."—the young lover in his trepidation repeated the words, and followed Corkey as faithfully as if he were getting the word for his part from the prompter—"this evening, and have to say that

owing to the sudden death of the manager, who fell over a table and broke his neck, stabbed to the heart by—by—by—Roaring Ralph Stackpole, there will be no more performance this evening, and—and—and them that wants their money back can get it at—at—the box office. Trusting that—"

"Come off, you pickled fool," bawled the prompter.

"Come off, you biled ijit," yelled the manager, who had got down to the opposite edge of the curtain, holding his inflamed nose in one hand and shaking the blood from the other where he had been cut by the broken crockery.

"Come off, you petrified mule!" cried Corkey through the hole.

And he did come off as red in the face as a pot of vermilion.

"You're a nice mutton-head, ain't you?"

"You're drunk."

"Didn't you tell me what to say, from the hole in the curtain?"

The way the prompter and the manager with his swelled nose, and Jawkins, who had "got about" with a black eye, went for that unfortunate man who did the young lovers, would have made a deacon's hair drop out.

There was "cussing" enough in the air to furnish a dozen theaters with blue fire.

"You're discharged, sir!"

"Git out of theater!"

"He's a disgrace to the perfession!" said Corkey.

The manager sent word to the ticket-seller to give nobody any money back.

Then the ticket seller and the crowd outside the box office had a row, which resulted in somebody throwing a quid of tobacco through the ticket hole which plastered itself over the eye of the treasurer like a poultice and made him howl.

The police came, and after a lot of promiscuous clubbing, and an awfully extensive assortment of blasphemy, quiet was restored in front.

On the stage Corkey laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, but with the exception of Johnny he was the only one who did that sort of thing.

As for Jawkins, he swore vengeance on the amateur who, after he had demolished the stage manager, vanished from the scene.

They found the ulster overcoat behind a pile of scenery, and also discovered that he had slit it into strips with a knife.

During all this grand row which Corkey had brought about, the red-faced sheriff's deputy had quietly sat in the doorway of the wardrobe room.

He was bound nothing should move him out of that place.

He had levied and meant to stay there till things

were settled if it took him all night and next day—or a month.

Now Corkey made up his mind to wind up his night's fun by boosting that deputy sheriff.

He thought of a way to do it very quickly.

The actors and actresses were all in their dressing-rooms making ready to go home.

Corkey went up to the supers' dressing-room.

"I say, boys, don't git off yer traps yet. Let's have a high old racket with that air deperty sheriff wot's planted himself in the wardrobe door. Will you go in for it?"

Of course they would.

"Now, see here, you fellers, just follow me just as you air."

Out of the room and down they went after Corkey.

There were ten of them.

The deputy sheriff had not seen this gang, in their outrageous looking attire.

His knowledge of the stage was exceedingly limited.

Corkey gathered up two or three old tin pans, and a sheet of sheet iron which was occasionally used to imitate the rattling of thunder, and two or three watchman's rattles.

"Start all these things at once," said Corkey; "and jest set up a reglar injun howlin and screeching, an' make a dead rush at him, an' if he don't git up an git then I'm a snoozer."

The wardrobe room door was just beside a stack of throne chairs, and heavy properties, so that unseen by the deputy, the boys could get very close, within a few feet of the deputy, unseen by him.

So, under Corkey's lead, they came up as near and as quietly as possible.

Then, at the signal from Corkey they set up an unearthly yelling and started the rattles and sheet iron, and the beating on the tin pans, and made a rush pell-mell at the deputy.

The deputy sitting there with nobody to talk to, had fallen into a half doze.

When that tremendous uproar broke upon his ear he leaped to his feet, and then he caught sight of the gang like of nondescripts, looking more like a band of demons let loose from the lower regions than anything mortal.

He gave one yell of terror, threw up his hands and made a dead bolt out of the door past the crowd, and plunged headlong over a stack of chairs, which, in his fright, and the semi-darkness of the stage he did not see.

Over went the chairs with a crash that frightened him more than ever, and howling and shouting and beating the pans came the gang of supers.

He gathered himself up from among the chairs, and went on in his mad career.

Not knowing anything about the stage, he lost all idea of where to go. He dodged about among the wings

in and out across the stage, down to the prompt place, his hair standing on end like stubble in a wheat field.

Still the shrieking crowd followed him until at last, driven to desperation, and with everything like thought driven out of his mind, he made a wild leap over the orchestra and disappeared in the darkness of the front of the house.

Then in triumph the supers returned to their dressing-rooms, and changing their clothes, were soon out in the street. Corkey remained behind until Jawkins came down from his room.

"What's all that infernal howling about?" he asked. "Runnin' out that air deputy," answered Corkey, with a grin.

Jawkins laughed.

"Look out, Corkey," said Jawkins, "or you'll be put where the dogs won't bark at you. You know we pull up stakes for Philadelphia to-morrow."

"Wot theayter?" asked Corkey.

"Fox's American Theater in Walnut Street."

"Wen do we begin, boss?"

"Monday night we're billed for."

"O K, and I'm mighty glad we're gittin' out of Jersey."

"Why, Corkey?"

"Cause they don't seem to paternize the lergitimist drama in this town."

"Oh, I don't know—we have had good houses, Corkey."

"Yes, considering the price."

"Come around to the hotel to-morrow morning, Corkey, I want to see you?"

"Certainly, sir. What time?"

"Any time after ten."

After Jawkins had gone, Corkey went out through the long passage-way leading to the street, at the end of which sat the stage doorkeeper.

"Sam," said Corkey, "just as I was crossin' the stage comin' in here, I thought I seen a man hiding away at the back of the orchestra. Maybe he's some fellow that's got a spite agin' the theayter, and has stayed behind so's to git a chance to set her on fire!"

"The devil, you say," exclaimed the doorkeeper. "Sure it was a man?"

"You bet, I've seen 'nuff men to know one when he sticks his head up above a seat."

The old watchman got up and, putting his pipe on the shelf behind him, said: "You run around to the station on the next block and get a policeman, and send him right around. Ef there is anybody there, he'll git jerked sure than shootin'."

Corkey started off, grinning all over. He met two policemen standing on the corner.

"Say, you fellers," said Corkey, "the stage doorkeeper, Sam, says he wants you right away to take in a feller he's ketchid hidin' in the front part of the house; and you'd better hurry, 'cos he's a desperate chap, maybe."

Off started the two policemen—Corkey after them—full tilt.

When they got in under the lead of the old watchman and Corkey, lanterns were got out, the gas was lighted at the lower proscenium boxes, and the search resulted in very soon collaring the frightened deputy sheriff, who had been vainly trying to get out the front way.

He had somewhat recovered from his fright, but still had a wild look in his eyes, and there was a nervous twitching on his lips and paleness of the red face, which showed how badly he had been frightened by the supes' onslaught.

The policemen grabbed him, and before he could speak, one of them slipped a pair of handcuffs over his wrists.

"He looks like a reg'lar insinderry," said the old watchman.

"More like a miserable gin histing sneak thief," said one of the officers.

"Come along now, no nonsense."

"Gen'd men, you're mistaken, I'm a deputy sheriff."

"Tell that to your lawyer."

"I tell you I am a deputy sheriff: and here's my badge."

He no sooner pointed to it, than, the policeman grabbed it and tore it from his vest.

"Where'd you steal this? You're a nice one."

"Ain't he awful," said Corkey, "Looks like one of the Houston Street gang."

The policeman took a firm grip on the deputy, and without more ado, half dragged, half pushed him down the center aisle, upon to the stage and took him up to the station house, followed by the stage doorkeeper.

Corkey skipped away to his lodgings.

Next morning he found one of the results of his wind-up joke.

The deputy who happened to be a newly appointed official, being a stranger to the Police Captain he was shoved into a cell, despite his protestations, but in the morning, having sent for the sheriff, he was released, swearing dire vengeance on the whole police force, and all the theaters in Christendom, and then went home to have his torn coat mended and put on a fresh boiled shirt.

Next morning Mr. Jawkins sent for Corkey in great haste.

Corkey wondering what on earth was the matter with the eminent tragedian at so early an hour, when all distinguished actors should be sleeping off their previous night's beer and fatigue, obeyed the summons.

He found Mr. Jawkins in his shirt and drawers, bending over one of his trunks tossing things out upon the floor, and swearing the air blue.

About the floor were scattered tunics, tights, and all the odds and ends of his wardrobe.

Jawkins was as red in the face as a boiled lobster, and as mad as sixteen wild bulls.

"See here," he roared at Corkey, as he came into the room; "see here."

"I'm here, boss, and seeing as well as I can without a pair of telescopes," answered Corkey.

"You're a nice dresser, you are, you infernal lunk-head!"

"Thankee," replied Corkey, cheerfully, swinging his hat in his hand, as smiling as if being called a lunk-head were one of the luxuries of existence. "Thankee, but if you'll tell me wot I'm sent for, maybe I kin—"

"Where are my white silk tights, the new ones I wore last night—cost me only last week twenty-five dollars. Didn't I tell you to be careful and pack everything into the basket?"

"You did, you *did*," said Corkey, "and I did pack all your traps, props and things, into the basket, and fetched 'em up here to this room and set 'em down right over there by that trunk, and there they set now, sir."

"Great Caesar's eyeballs! do you want to tell me I'm blind. I know the basket's there, but not the white silk tights. It's the tights I want, and if you don't find them, I'll take it out of your wages and send you adrift."

"Well, I won't sink if you do. I didn't see no white silk tights into your dressin'-room after the show was out, sir."

"W-h-a-t!"

"I've said it."

"Do you mean to tell me I didn't wear white silk tights last night? You better tell me I didn't act at all."

"I seen you a tryin' to act desperate hard," replied Corkey, not all frightened at Mr. Jawkins' wrath.

"Where are those tights?" thundered Jawkins, tossing things about in his vain search, and glaring melodramatically at each piece as he turned it over.

"That's a conundrum which nobody but the tights kin answer," said Corkey, calmly seating himself upon a chair, and watching the movements of his employer with a similar degree of pleasure which he would find in the antics of a cage of monkeys.

"Entirely new—imported from Paris—I got 'em expressly to fit my Romeo dress—gone—gone." And then he began his wild hunt through his trunks over again.

Corkey was eyeing him, his face beaming with delight. He grinned all over, for while sitting there he had caught a glimpse of the missing tights.

"Wot time did you git into bed this mornin'?" asked Corkey.

"This mornin'! What's that to you?"

"Oh, nothin', but praps if I knowed that I might give a guess where the tights might have got to."

Jawkins paused and with a pair of new breeches in one hand and a pair of buff boots in the other, glared at Corkey a moment, and then proceeded with his search.

"Supposing I didn't get to bed till four o'clock—what of it?"

"That counts for it!" said Corkey, grinning; "You see boss, that one last mug of beer—"

"You grinning varlet of the beastly beer, I drink not!"

"Whisky then, and Jersey whisky is awful."

"That last snifter, boss is what lost them tights." Jawkins stared.

"What d'ye mean?" he growled.

"Why you put 'em somewheres, and forgot where it was."

Jawkins, who really had filled himself the night before after the performance with a few "pints" of extra dry lightning, stared still harder.

"And I kin tell you just where you put 'em."

"If you knew where I put 'em, why didn't you tell me at once, you rascal?"

"Cause I didn't know then wot I know now."

"Speak, boy speak,"—said the somewhat mollified tragedian.

"Well—them new white silk tights of yours is under yer drawers on yer legs where you left 'em last night, after the performance," said Corkey.

One glance satisfied Jawkins. Sure enough, in his haste in changing his dress he had not taken off his tights, but put on drawers and pants over them.

"I saw the feet of them," said Corkey, "and I knowd you never wore silk stockings, so I guessed them was the tights."

Jawkins had nothing more to say.

He handed Corkey half a dollar and dismissed him.

"Be sure, Corkey, and have everything ready. We take the next train to Philadelphia."

"Kerect boss," answered Corkey.

Ten minutes after he met Johnny and "whacked up" the half dollar with him.

CHAPTER IX.

"If this isn't the darndest square shouldered town I ever lit into, I'm a duffer," said Corkey, as on the morning of rehearsal he made his way to the American Theater. "The feller that got it up must have bin a checker fiend, and thought he was a makin' a draw game of it."

Corkey couldn't get the hang of such squareness in the blocks and straightness in the streets.

"Poor fellers," said Johnny, "they isn't ter blame, they can't help it. Every feller can't be born'd in New York, Corkey."

"An' look at them bildin's; derved of there's one in the whole place that ain't jist alike."

"Yew, an' some of 'em's more alike the others. Wonder of their theayters is all alike in the same way?"

"Guess not. They can't come their checker board bizness on them fellers. I'm thinkin' Boss Jawkins 'll have a sweat of it a playin' here."

"Why?"

"Cos I heard Jimmy Dozer over inter the Bowery say as he's been here, that these here Philadelphia snoozers is all Quakers wot goes ter bed wid their hats on, histe a rumbereller over their heads for a night cap, and Jimmy said nary one of 'em ever went inter a theater."

"Jimmy's a lunkhead. There ain't no Quakers now; they all went off years ago, with a feller wich his name was Penn, an' he was the fust Injun tamer ever seed in this country. Didn't he play it onto them scalpers, though?"

By th' time they had turned into Walnut Street from Ninth, and were in front of the theater.

"I'm flamed, ef there ain't two theayters onto the same 'lock."

Corkey had 'or the first time noted the Walnut Street Theater at the corner:

"Looks as though it wouldn't take mor'n a jaybird's sneeze to blow the old thing down."

"Is Jawkins to be here this mornin'?" asked Johnny.

"In course he is. Wot d'yer s'pose these here country duffers know 'bout rehearsin' and gittin' up star pieces. Wy, I kin teach 'um, myself."

"Hello, Corkey!" cried a cheery voice.

It was Jawkins' voice, if ever Jawkins spoke.

"I'm here, sir," said Corkey.

"You know we do Macbeth to-night."

"Well, I rather guess it'll be *done*," put in Johnny.

"Sar-cas-tic boo-oy!" observed Jawkins. "Now, Corkey, I want you to see that the supes are all right. I leave that to you, and I'll so tell the prompter."

"Kerect! I'll make 'em right. That's my gait every time."

Corkey and Johnny went in upon the stage.

It was early yet, and but one or two stage carpenters and scene shifters were there.

Corkey sauntered in and inspected with great deliberation the surroundings.

"What dy'er want here?" said a short lump of a man in his shirt sleeves to Corkey.

"I don't want yer er I'd sent my body-servant after yer," replied Corkey.

"I'll neck you out'n here, young feller!"

"Oh, don't, Pudgy—don't, it might make yer short winded."

"Got any bizness here, say? if yer have out with it, an' then git up an' git, or I'll lift you thunderin' quick."

"You wait till I see Jimmy Pilgrim, yer boss, er Fox, an' I'll let you know wet my bizness is, and you won't want to do much liftin' after'ards. I'm Jawkins' dresser and stage carpenter, Pudgy."

The short fat carpenter laughed.

"You look like it, you do," was the answer. "Well, all I've got to say is, that you'd better keep out of the way till you're wanted."

"Where's the supes' dressin'-room?"

"Up there," said the pudgy, pointing to a narrow pair of stairs.

"Johnny, les' git up ther and survey the den."

Up they went.

"Jimminy Christmas! wot a hole!"

"Wus than the old Bowery."

"An' more of it."

"I say, Johnny, we'll show these here philamalink fellers a wrinkle or two of fun afore they're two nights older ef they don't walk the chalk."

"We'll butter their cheese for 'em, you bet."

When rehearsal time came, Corkey got a sight of the supes.

"Wot legs!" said Johnny, "regular shadpoles."

"It ud take a bale of cotton to pad 'em out big enough to pull tights over."

"Now, you fellers," said Corkey, when he had hired them at the back of the stage, "I want some of you to do the appearishuns, an' I don't want enny botch made of it, d'ye hear?"

The boys grinned.

One of them nudged the other and said:

"Wonder what he takes us for?"

Johnny who happened to overhear the supes' little growl answered:

"Fur shads in the Spring."

Corkey got along with them very well, and at the close of rehearsal informed Jawkins that he thought the night's show would go off all right so far as the supes were concerned.

"I wish the rest of them were as good, then, for they are an awful set of muffs. That King Duncan's a reg'lar old guy, don't know a line of his part, and the bleeding sergeant 'll stick surer'n lightning."

After giving Corkey his order, Jawkins sought consolation in company with the low comedian at the nearest beer-mill, while Corkey and Johnny sailed out to see the sights of the city.

Night came, and with it the crowd pouring into the theater.

"Fox's 'American' being a variety concern, the 'sublime tragedy of Macbeth,' was preceded by the performance of a magician, a clog dance, a comic singer, a young woman in spangled tights, who astonished the patrons of the drama and lovers of Shakespeare by remaining under water, precisely three minutes and



Amid the jeers and laughter of the audience the supe made a bolt across the stage, the enraged Jawkins in hot pursuit,

twenty-two seconds—on the bills—but which period as measured by the audience amounted to a fraction less than two minutes.

Then a Dutch comedian gave a recitation, a puffy-faced Anastasia Delorme, (Miss Cruller) sang a doleful ballad, and then after an overture by the orchestra, the curtain went up on Macbeth, and the first appearance of the "eminent American representative of Shakespeare—Mr. Jawkins."

While the witches were in the first scene Corkey was standing by the prompt place, looking upon the stage from behind what is termed "The termater" wing.

He overheard the young man who was directly at change of scene to do the *bleeding sergeant* say to the prompter:

"Now, be sure and watch me close. I'm awfully shaky in this part. Can't catch the words. Don't let me stick on any account. Just get close in to the wing, so I can catch the whisper."

Now, Corkey had heard Macbeth so often at the Old Bowery that he had it almost at his finger's ends, and it so happened that especially did he have it almost dead letter perfect; so he made up his mind that here was a chance for a streak of fun.

The scene changed, and after King Duncan came down the stage, on went the *bleeding sergeant*, leaning upon a couple of supes.

After Malcolm said "Say to the king the knowledge of the broil as thou didst leave it," the *sergeant* began: "Doubtfully it—!" and then he stuck.

Meantime the prompter had been called up the stage, and as prompters always do, forgot all about the suffering stick on the stage.

Now was Corkey's chance. The *sergeant* hummed and sputtered.

"Go on!" growled Duncan.

"I knew that idiot'd stick," said Jawkins at the wing, looking as savage as a two-edged meat ax.

"Doubtfully it stood, it stood—" began the *sergeant*, casting a piteous look toward the vacant prompt place.

"I'll give him the word," grinned Corkey. "Doubtfully it stood—go on, old feller."

The *sergeant* brightened up.

He thought it was the prompter who was helping him out.

"Doubtfully it stood as two choked swimmers that sling their art together," whispered Corkey.

The dazed *sergeant* repeated Corkey's words, scarcely knowing what he did, for he heard the audience laughing in front, and saw Jawkins shaking his fist behind him from the opposite side.

"The merciless MacDonald Kerns with his yellow glasses," repeated the *sergeant*.

"Go it, stick," roared a dozen voices in the gallery.

"Get off the stage you infernal jabbering idiot," howled Jawkins.

"And fortune on his damaged barrel smiling showed like an apple core," whispered Corkey nearly bursting with the fun.

The poor *sergeant* repeated the words.

Then the whole audience roared and the boys in the gallery shrieked and whistled and stamped.

King Duncan's wrath got the best of him, and giving his royal robes a shake backwards, he rushed at the unfortunate *sergeant* and grasping him with both hands by the side of his head run him off the stage as if he was a wheelbarrow—using his ears for the handles.

In doing this his wig dropped off, and instead of the venerable white hair of the king, there was visible a short crop of the reddest hair mortal audience ever saw.

Then up went another roar from the gallery.

King Duncan turned to pick up his wig, and in stooping unfortunately brought his fiery red head violently in contact with the bread basket of one of the supes, and caused the supe to utter such a groan, double up so comically, and contort his face into such a diabolical expression of pain, that it made the audience yell wilder and louder than ever.

It was the funniest beginning they had ever seen in Macbeth.

When that *sergeant* was run off, the enraged prompter to make amends for not being at his own post grabbed Corkey's victim by the nape of his neck and amused himself by kicking him up the stage behind the wings until the poor fellow fairly bellowed.

Jawkins rushed up and down frantically howling for something or somebody to tear.

Corkey and Johnny stood in the wing enjoying the fun, and laughing till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

The rest of the act went on in mere dumb show.

That *bleeding sergeant's* "dead stick" was better fun for the crowd in front than anything there had been in the variety programme.

When the next act came on, there was something like quiet. The boys had been out, and had renewed their supply of peanuts and beer, and sat quiet while the great Jawkins bellowed Macbeth's troubles into their expanded ears.

The fourth act opened with the meeting of the witches in a cave.

"Give 'em plenty of thunder and lightning," said Jawkins to the prompter, as the curtain went up, "and if any of the speaking apparitions stick, give the sheet iron a shake."

"All right, sir," said the prompter.

Corkey bethought him of another dive for fun.

He noticed that the same fellow who had "busted up" on the *bleeding sergeant*, was to do the first apparition

which comes up through a trap behind the cauldron.

Upon his head, the apparition should wear a helmet. The *sergeant* had changed his dress, and putting on his helmet, went down under the stage to be ready when the signal should be given for him to be elevated above the cauldron.

Corkey followed him.

Under the stage it was dark and gloomy, one gaslight only burning dimly.

The men were at the trap ready to hoist it.

Corkey on his way down saw a big, bell crowned, old fashioned black hat, which had been used by one of the variety actors.

It was as shabby-looking as the fag end of a pauper's life.

Corkey took the hat down under the stage with him. In going down the steps the *sergeant* in his hurry to be on time accidentally knocked off his helmet of gilded pasteboard, and it fell over the rail into the darkness below.

"You go ahead," said Corkey to him. "I'll git yer head gear for you."

"Thank you," said the apparition, "don't be long about it, my boy," and on he went toward the trap.

Corkey found the helmet, but was for reasons of his own in no great hurry.

"Come, hurry up there with that helmet. Have yer got it?"

"All kerect—I have," said Corkey.

"Great Jerusalem, be quick, I can't go up without it."

"Ain't I hurrying all I can?" answered Corkey, his voice lowered and sounding as if he were in some far off corner of the cellar.

Corkey kept up the delay as long as possible.

He knew the trap bell would soon ring, and start the man at the windlass by which the trap was run up.

In one hand he held the helmet, and in the other the old bell crowned plug hat.

Slowly, amid the posts and other paraphernalia with which beneath the stage is always crowded, he made his way near the trap.

The apparition fellow caught sight of him.

"Come, you, hurry up—thunder and lightning—be quick—I—"

At this moment the trap warning signal rang.

Corkey was at the apparition's elbow at the same instant.

"Here," said Corkey, "let me put it on for you."

In a second Corkey put the old plug hat on the fellow's head instead of the helmet.

The hoisting signal rang, and up went the trap.

"Seems to me this helmet feels kinder queer," thought the apparition as he went up, but he had no time to investigate.

The trap man had turned away, and it is doubtful

whether they saw the change Corkey had made.

Corkey threw the helmet aside, and ran back up the stairs to the stage.

He got into one of the entrances just in time to see the fun.

The witches were just closing their speech. "Come high, come low, thyself and office deftly show." The thunder rattled, and up came the wretched apparition with that awful plug hat upon his head.

The audience rose right up the moment they caught sight of it and yelled:

"Shoot the hat!"

"Who's yer hatter?"

"Put a brick in it!"

"Oh, what a ghost."

These and a hundred other cries filled the air.

Jawkins, who was on the stage, and had just braced himself in a tragic attitude to receive the apparition, was for the moment dumbfounded.

The sight of an apparition in Macbeth coming up in full view, with a plug hat upon his head, was certainly calculated to demoralize the mind of even a Forrest.

The witches standing in a row and waving their skinny arms, and the withered boughs which they held in their hands, roared. They couldn't help it.

As for the apparition, until he heard the yell, "Shoot the hat!" he had no more idea that he was a laughing-stock and the victim of misplaced confidence than he had of taking a trip to the moon.

But when the cry of "Hats off in front," and other howling references to himself came to his ear, he involuntarily put his hand to his head.

And his fingers clutched—that hat, and his jaw fell.

"Sold!" he said, inwardly wishing the whole entire stage would cave in and hide him from human sight.

The prompter, seeing the condition of affairs, gave the signal to let the trap down, but the men below unfortunately misunderstood it, and under the impression that the man in it was not high enough, began hoisting it higher.

Here Jawkins fairly jumped up and gnashed his teeth.

For the apparition had only slipped on a sort of mailed shirt, which came down no further than his waist, under the supposition that his head and shoulders would only be visible to the audience.

As it was, he was suddenly shot up so that added to the plug hat on his head there came in full view the wonderful and ludicrous spectacle of a man in plug hat, a shirt of mail, and a pair of ordinary street pants. This settled Jawkins.

Flesh and blood could stand no man. He gave a Forrestonian roar, and made a rush at the apprentice in the plug hat.

"You everlasting miserable duffer, I'll—"

The apparition didn't stand there to hear anymore or wait for results.

He made a dead bolt to get off the stage and had he not caught his foot in one of the crooked boughs of the witches he might have succeeded.

As it was, he was sprawled out on the stage and capped a climax of trouble for the night.

Jawkins making the air blue with profanity, strode off the stage.

The prompter rang the curtain down, but that didn't drive the audience out.

They waited, and stamped, and yelled.

Over all other cries were shouts for:

"Jawkins—Jawkins!"

"Mr. Jawkins," said the manager, "they are calling for you."

"Who's calling for me?" growled Jawkins.

"Why, the audience?"

"Well, let 'em call. Tell 'em to call to-morrow night, and see me kill a dozen or two of your infernal boot-jack actors. If the Jawkins family knows itself—Jawkins isn't going in front of the curtain this night."

And the eminent strode away with the imperial stride of an emperor going to his royal banquet.

Still the people howled.

"What's to be done?" said the manager, appealing to Jawkins.

"Put 'em out," was the answer of the wrathful Jawkins.

"But they won't go."

"Neither will I—in front of the curtain."

"But Mr. Jawkins—"

"Oh, go get a hose, run the pipe out through the peep-hole in the curtain and let on the water. That'll start 'em."

The manager saw that Jawkins was immovable.

Just then, Corkey, his face red with laughter, came in sight.

The moment he saw Jawkins looking at him Corkey put on a look of lamb-like innocence.

An idea struck Jawkins.

He grinned over it grimly.

"I say, Jimmy," he said to the manager, "there's my dresser, Corkey. Send him on in front."

The manager looked at Corkey.

"What, him? He won't do. They won't listen to him; they want you."

"I kin settle them," said Corkey with an air of bold assurance.

There was no other alternative, for the manager knew it wouldn't do for himself to apologize.

So he consented.

Corkey, who in his new suit didn't look so very frightful after all, ran his fingers through his hair, and

when the prompter pulled aside the edge of the great curtain for him to pass through, he stepped out.

Nothing short of a general earthquake could frighten Corkey, anyhow.

Stepped out?

No, he made a run to the center and held up his hands.

In a moment the tumult ceased and all waited.

Corkey's hair appeared to stand on end.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, as if out of breath, "It ain't no use waitin', fur no more of Macbeth kin be done."

"The idiot! Come off, you blockhead!" cried the manager from the side.

"The manager has bust—"

"Come off," bawled the infuriated manager, "or I'll—"

"Bust a blood vessel and there are seven doctors—"

That settled it.

Roaring and screeching the crowd began to ooze out. Corkey went off the opposite side from where the manager was waiting to collar him, and when the manager ran across the stage after him, he was gone.

Jawkins was delighted.

"That's some satisfaction anyhow," he said. "Ye gods of high Olympus, a plug hat for an apparition in Macbeth. It's a wonder Banquo's ghost hadn't come on with a glass of beer in one hand and a pretzel in the other."

CHAPTER X.

CORKEY and Johnny before the week's engagement of the great Jawkins was over became tolerably well posted in the ins and outs of Philadelphia. Nearly every day they exercised themselves after rehearsal in walking about through its highways and byways, and taking surveys of its "big bildins" and things.

"Tain't no great shakes no way," said Johnny. "Wot they wants is fer to have our Sixth Ward jest dumped inter the town ter make it lively. There ain't nough git up and git 'mong these Quakers to skin a sick purp."

"Yer don't know 'em," said Corkey, "and that's where yer're wrong. There's a pile of git up an' git and keep a movin' 'em, but it tain't on the New York style, Johnny. They's slower but they does it. I kinder like it, cos you see it don't keep a foller hustlin' to keep up with the rest like it does down there on the Bowery." "But they hain't no coffy an' cake dives here, no waffel carts, an' them's wat tell on makin' bizness fus' class."

"A feller'd make a big beoodle ef he'd start a all nighter in coffee and cakes, once'd these here fellers'd git to know it. Them newsboys that skips about here hav' a hungry look."

"And wouldn't them cakes wid de butter jest rollin' out in 'em make 'em fat an' give 'em a voice? You bet."

They went into Independence Hall and examined the relics of the "old continental times."

There was an ancient-looking man in the hall who seemed to have charge of it, for when Corkey went in he was explaining to three or four visitors the history of the various features of the hall and its contents.

"Les ask that old feller, wen he gits through with dem Quaks," said Johnny, "bout them old benches an' things."

Presently the old man left the party, and Corkey hailed him.

"I say, boss," began Corkey.

"What do you mean by such lowness of speech to people older'n yourself?" interrupted the old man.

"Wot I mean to say," continued Corkey, "is, ain't you the boss of this show shop?"

"Wretched boy, this is no show shop; this is the sacred hall of Independence."

"Wat's it independent about?" asked Johnny.

"Sich ignorance in an age of school is lamentable," said the old man. "Boys."

"Boys," said Corkey. "Boys, we ain't no boys, that young gen'l'man"—Corkey pointed to Johnny—"is a furrin nobility feller, regular nob, belongs to the incog family, a tourin the country, an' I'm a actor."

The old man smiled a smile of benevolent pity.

"Where are you from?"

"I'm right over from Victoria's palace; I'm the chief duffer to her royal nibs."

"And I'm a high tragedy star from the Gran' Duke an' Bowery Theaters," said Corkey.

"Ain't we givin' the old snoozer a kid, eh?" whispered Johnny.

"Shut up."

The old man looked about him a moment, and then fixed his eyes on the two youths.

"What'd you come into this hall for? To refresh yourselves with a sight of the glories souveneirs of our early struggle for freedom, and renew in your youthful breasts a loftier spirit of patriotism."

"Oh, my eyes," said Johnny to himself.

"We'd like to refresh ourselves—this young nobleman and me—with somethin' easy to swaller," said Corkey; "but ef you wants sumthin' lofty, in high toast style, jest you git over to the Bowery and git in a snifter of the sperrit of the dramer—Putnam an' Old Wash a crossin' the Del'ware on two hunks of ice in fine tablox."

"Have you no school teachers in New York?"

"Well," said Corkey, "we did have one jest before the big fire."

"What, only one teacher? How these boys can lie."

"Yes, sir, only one teacher, an' he went off after a school of mackerel an' never got back."

"Poor, benighted, lost heathen," muttered the old man.

"I say, mister, wot's that big bell for?"

"That's the Independence bell which rang out liberty to all the land."

Corkey looked at the venerable relic."

"That air belt ain't half as big as our City Hall bell."

"An' the derved old thing's cracked. That can't ring for a cent."

"Keep your irreverent tongues quiet," said the old man. "You can look around, but you will not be allowed to ridicule the mementoes of your forefathers."

"An' yit you calls this a free country," said Johnny. Corkey saw a bench near the platform at the upper end of the hall.

"Is that one of yer park benches?" asked Johnny; "ef it is there ain't much room fur a feller to lay back and sn-oze in. Don't begin wid de iron 'uns?"

"Young men," said the old man, "that is the seat upon which General George Washington, the father of his country—"

"That's old Pete Richings, he always played Old Wash, an' Carline done the singing."

"And General Lafayette sat together."

"Did they both set on that thing at oncet?"

"Yes, both of them."

"Did you see 'em a settin' on it?"

"Me? Of course not. I wasn't born then."

"Well then," said Corkey, "how'd you know old Wash and the frog eater set onto it?"

"It is a historical fact. You can't dispute history. They sat there."

"An' hain't the bench bin moved since?" asked Johnny, putting on an awfully serious face.

The old man stared at Johnny.

"What a heathen?" he thought. But he said nothing for a moment.

Then he answered:

"My poor boy, I admire your curiosity but I pity your ignorance. Your mind is a perfect blank."

"Yes," said Corkey, "he drawe' it out of a lottery." And then they both laughed, and even the old man had to smile.

"Not bad—f'r him," he said softly to himself.

"Where's Wash's boots?" asked Corkey.

"Whose boots?"

"Why, Wash's boots, the boots he weared when he fit the Hessian fellers?" put in Johnny.

"These boys are crazy."

"Jawkins told me they had a pair of 'em in the pay-tent office in Washington, an' it seems to me they order have a pair her."

"You talk foolish," said the old man.

"Hadrn he only one pair?"

The old man turned away in utter disgust and walked over toward a couple of visitors, who had just entered.

"Didn't we kid the old buffer, eh?" grinned Johnny.

"An' I'm derved ef I don't think he swallered it all."

"Cept the boots; I guess they kinder choked 'im off."

Corkey and Johnny looked around the room at the paintings and other curiosities, and then, before going out, stopped again in front of the big bell.

"How that old chap did try to stuff 'bout that bell."

"Oh, he's cracked wus'n the bell," said Johnny.

"Ef I had that bell I know what I'd do wid it."

"Wot?"

"I'd truck her off fer old junk. 'Tain't no use a standin' there, an' it don't draw. Ef it was wuth a cent fur show Barnum'd have had it long ago. He don't skip wot's wuth grabbin' for a show, you bet."

They went out into Chestnut Street and made their way toward the theater.

Then they met Jawkins having a high old row with Jimmy Pilgrim the stage manager.

"I tell yese, Mither Fox will not have a calshium light, an' fat's the use of sayin' any more 'bout it?" said Jimmy.

"I don't care what Fox won't have. Am I not the star?"

"Yese air."

"Am I not directing my own plays?"

"Oi belave ye air."

"And the theater furnishes the properties?"

"I belave yu, my boy."

"And lights?"

"You're roight, me darlin'."

"Then I want a calcium light on the tableau of the third act."

"An' it's a calshium oim sure ye won't git, my boy, for wen Fox makes up his moind not to do a thing the devil himself cudden't bate him into dewing it; d'ye moind that?"

"Then I won't play. I'll throw up my engagement and put a card in the papers that'll settle Fox."

"Fat the devil he care for yure kayrd—isn't he play-in' draw poker wid 'im every day, begorra."

Se they had it back and forth until up came the manager himself.

They were standing on the stage at the time.



Three or four of the cats ran down the stage; and with tails and backs up, leaped over the footlights in among the musicians.

Corkey and Johnny were at the back, and had seated themselves upon a set of throne steps.

"What's all this row about?"

The stage manager explained.

So did the great Jawkins.

The manager said:

"Mr. Jawkins, I only allow the calcium to be used upon the ballet groupings. It makes the women look better."

"Sir-r," said Jawkins, "without a calcium I will not play the part."

"Then somebody else will," retorted the manager.

"And if he does I'll crush him," said Jawkins, savagely.

"I say, Corkey," said Johnny, "old Foxey's got him, eh?"

"Not for a cent," said Corkey. "Jawkins knows his little biz, when he isn't full of bug juice."

Finally a compromise was made. Jawkins consented to knock off five dollars from his agreements, and the manager in view of that would give the calcium a chance.

"There's nothing fetches an audience like a blazing calcium," said Jawkins.

"And there's nothing fetches a manager any quicker'n five dollars, excepting ten dollars," added the stage manager.

Jawkins, after giving Corkey a few directions as to his dresses for the night's performance, started off, then returned and said:

"Corkey, now don't leave anything in my dressing room to-night. We leave here to-morrow morning."

"Where're we going?"

"Baltimore, my boy."

"Baltimore?"

"Yes, to the Holiday Street shop."

"I say, boss, are you going to break on Fox?"

"Well, no, not exactly; but, then, we'll see what we shall see."

And Jawkins was gone but not before ascertaining that Corkey had the supes all right for the night's performance.

It was a Roman toga piece that night, written especially for Jawkins, full of Cæsars and Appius Claudius and Senators, with a loud sprinkling of the wretched rabble and all the rest of the sort of people who make Rome howl upon the stage.

Corkey was bound to make Rome howl in his own way, so he sat back there upon the throne steps with Johnny, thinking up a plan.

While he was sitting there the carpenters were busy about the stage getting the scenes ready in place and the property man setting it.

Contrary to the usual plan of performance, the play

was to come first, the variety olio to close the nightly bill.

"See here, you boys, what'er you there for?"

"Nothin' perticular except to make fools ask questions," was Johnny's answer.

"Don't be sassy to the prop fakir," said Corkey, "s'long's he behaves himself decent."

"If you ain't overburdened with work jest at this minit, s'posin' you help me."

"Ke-rect," said Corkey, "help my neighbor's the game for me. Wot's the work?"

"Just help me set this senate scene; the play opens with it."

"Why don't you wait till night?"

"'Cause I'm goin' to a funeral this afternoon an' I mayn't git back much afore seven o'clock, so I thought I'd save trouble to-night."

"Which means," said Corkey to Johnny, "he's goin' to get chuck full of old rye and won't feel like work."

"Bring them stone seats and put 'em down here. I'll show you."

The stone seats were small boxes painted white, to resemble marble blocks upon which all Roman senators when in solemn conclave in the senate were supposed to seat themselves.

The boxes were open at the bottom.

As Corkey and Johnny brought them out from the back of the stage the property man arranged them in a semi-circle in front of which upon a raised dais was to be seated the "Boss Roman" of the senate, who presided over their deliberations.

"Put these three down here, separate from the rest. They are for the three conspirators to sit on. There that's hunky dory—all right." Then the property man, with the help of Corkey and Johnny got the spears and banners in readiness for the supers.

Also a few daggers and other Roman playthings which his plot called for.

"Got all your set made for the first act, haven't you?" said the property man to the carpenters and scene shifters then and there present.

"Yes."

"Then the seats and things needn't be moved."

"No, they're all right."

"That'll do," said the property man to Corkey, "and thankee for your help."

Corkey marched off up the stage followed by Johnny. "He might have given a feller enough for his beer," said the dissatisfied Johnny.

"Maybe he hadn't enough fur his ownself."

Presently Corkey exclaimed gleefully:

"I've got it."

"Got what?"

"A racket fur that air Roman Senate bizness."

"What is it?"

"Leastways I guess I have," said Corkey.

"Well, wot is it anyhow," said Johnny, impatiently.

"You know they've got lots of cats a roamin' about the bldin'."

"Well."

"There's two or three down under the stage; there's one up into the wardrobe and there's a couple that's a loungin' all day in the property room."

"Well, they ain't a troublin' anybody," said Johnny, "I'm goin' to make 'em trouble somebody ef I have luck and kin ketch 'em."

"Water you goin' to do wid 'em? Tie their tails together an' set 'em to yowlin' and spittin'?"

"No, nothin' of the kind, Johnny. You jest wait, kinder help me hang around here till these fellers all git away an' I'll show you. If nobody moves them senit boxes after I fix 'em you'll see a lively old time round here in the fust act."

Johnny "smelled a mice" now, and of course was in for the fun.

With him what Corkey did was right, if he blew the whole theater up with everybody in it. Corkey was his law, rule, and the chief end of existence.

An hour or more they waited and at last all the stage hands were gone; the women had finished sweeping in front of the house, and Corkey and Johnny were left alone on the stage.

Once the stage door-keeper looked in and saw them.

"Why ain't you boys out, eh?"

"A workin' fur the prop fakir," said Corkey. "He had to go off and got me and my pard to help him out."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Nice help you'll be," and the door-keeper went back to his post at the back door and resumed smoking the pipe of peace varying the monotony of his time by dozing off a string of cat naps.

Corkey, meanwhile, was taking another sort of cat naps.

In the course of an hour he and Johnny had caught up all the Tom cats of the theater.

Then cautiously one by one as they were caught, they were placed under one of the boxes representing stone seats.

In the top of these boxes there was a small auger hole which probably had been put there to lift them by.

Under each one of the three conspirators' seats there was a cat.

Under half a dozen of the other seats were also cats.

It is a fact, which Corkey well knew too, as do all boys who have had dealings with cats for purposes of amusement, that if they—the cats—not the boys—are shut up in a dark place, they will not make a noise.

Not a meow will be heard so long as their prison is not disturbed, or the light is kept out.

Under these boxes it was dark as Erebus.

"There," said Corkey, "I guess we got 'em, if them boxes isn't tetch'd."

Johnny was as tickled as a piper playing before a king.

Corkey and Johnny could do no more.

The play opened with the meeting of the Roman Senate.

It was called "Cicero or the Triumver's Revenge."

Jawkins was the Cicero.

Night came, and with it first of all and earliest, Corkey and Johnny.

Firstly Corkey examined in the semi-darkness of the stage the boxes.

Evidently they had not been disturbed.

All was well.

The orchestra blew away at the opening overture.

The prompter rang the warning bell and took a last look at the stage and its setting.

"All right?"

"All right," was the reply.

He clapped his hands—"clean stage," ran to his place, and up went the curtain.

"Rome shall be free," cried Jawkins in the stage as Cicero.

"Here come the senators."

"And at their head the most notorious Cataline."

A little fat actor did Cataline. He came on whispering with two other conspirators on either side of him.

They marched solemnly down and seated themselves apart from the rest in the three boxes.

Then on came the senators and seated themselves.

Then came with a heavy tragedy stride the "boss" Roman of them all and seated himself on the throne or dais.

The scene was impressive. Corkey was on as one of the senators. Johnny had stationed himself in one of the entrances.

"How's them cats going to git out, I'd like to know," said Johnny to himself.

He had not seen the rehearsal.

Corkey had.

Corkey knew that the senate, after Jawkins as Cicero made his big speech, was to break up in a grand row. Cataline and his dumbfounded conspirators were to rush off while Jawkins struck an attitude and exclaimed as the scene changed. "Ha! ha! most noble Numitorius, Rome shall yet be saved."

The crisis came.

"I'll hear no more," cried Cataline, as Cicero finished his speech in which in forty lines of blank verse he urged the senate to stand up to the rack.

The senate arose.

Cataline and the three conspirators kicked over their seats.

Corkey had posted the rest of the supe senators to do the same with their boxes.

They all rose, accidentally overturned their seats, and rushed off, all echoing Cicero's words.

"Rome shall yet be rescued."

Then out upon the stage rushed a yeowling gang o cats, black, yellow and white, and the audience yelled.

Three or four of the cats scampered down the stage, and with tails and backs up, leaped over the footlights in among the musicians.

One big yellow Tom hit directly on the head of the leader and he, giving a howl, grabbed the cat and flung it behind him into the air, where it fell among the women in the parquette, and they screamed, and one of them fainted dead away.

The rest of the cats plunged behind the scenes, all save one, and that one an awfully mangy specimen, made a dive into one of the procenium boxes, where sat the manager with two or three ladies.

When that cat planted itself in the cushioned edge of the box, its eyes glaring with fright, that manager in less than one minute was half way up the aisle leading from the box to the front of the house, and the ladies following him shrieking like a bedlam let loose.

The gallery boys roared with delight, and so did those in the tier below.

"Scat!"

"Poor pussy wants a corner."

"Szt—meow."

"M-a-r-i-a-r!"

"C-o-m-e-i-n-t-o-o-u-r-b-a-c-k-y-a-r-d."

"M-e-o-w-m-e-o-w."

"Cat's up."

"Hurrah!"

These and a score of other cries and discordant imitations of cats filled the air.

Jawkins was wild.

The prompter whistled in the change of scene, but when the characters came on somebody upstairs yelled out:

"They're goin' to swop cats," and that settled that scene, and the curtain came down, amid an awful uproar and caterwauling in front and an ocean of swearing behind the scenes.

Jawkins laid it all to a trick of the manager to avoid using the calcium light.

The manager laid it to the property man's assistant, and the property man's assistant swore it was one of the stage carpenters, who was known to be a practical joker.

Not until the last act did the audience get quieted down so that anything of the play could be heard, and

then Jawkins was so demoralized by his wrath that he forgot his part and stuck dead.

Corkey and Johnny reveled in the success of their little racket.

CHAPTER XI.

"I say, Johnny, I don't like this town for a cent," said Corkey. "It ain't my sort of dive. Darned if there's any sort of fun here 'tall. Wot I means is outside unperfessional fun."

"Ain't there, though?" responded Johnny. "Wy, me and that hungry feller Dick Burton, you know that air supe wot always gits his tights on wrong and picks out a dress five sizes too big fur hisself? Well, I and him had a lot of fun a guyin' a catfish peddler."

"Catfish peddler?" said Corkey, inquiringly.

"Yes, reg'lar biz. Catfish an' waffels in this town is wat baked beans and fish-balls is in Boston. It's there reg'lar daily bread. An' I tell you them catfish wen they're fried wid de skins off ain't no soup house dish I kin tell you."

"Wat'er you a guyin them fellers fer? They ain't wuth it. There ain't no fun into it, Johnny. There's more solid square racket in the sixth ward 'en in a half block of the Bowery than there is in the whole of this here place."

"It's fun fer here," said Johnny. "Wot's fun into one place isn't fun in another, maybe. But then a feller's got to take suthin in, you know. I wonder ef that Baltimore's anything of a sportin' town?"

"You bet," answered Corkey.

"Wen'll we git there?"

"We starts to-night."

"Does the boss open out there the night we gits there?"

"In course he does. I say, Johnny, he's a mighty bad actor—in New York."

"Ain't nowhere 'longside of Studley an' Bill Whalley, is he?"

"But wen he gits out inter them country towns, he's a mighty big gun—a reg'lar buster on two wheels."

"Wot a lot of money he rakes in—don't he?"

"He gits his little ding every night."

"Wot does he do wid it—salts it down, maybe?"

"Nary a salt. Bucks the tiger."

"W-a-t! Is he one of dem gay gamboliers, too?"

"No, he ain't no gambolier. He don't make a bizness on to it—just plays fer fun, and he don't make nothin' by it either. Buckin the tiger ain't a payin' bizness, my boy, fur them that ain't in with the tiger."

This exchange of opinion between Corkey and his chum occurred while they were sitting in Washington Square, watching the morning life of the city as it went to and fro past them.

That night Corkey and Johnny received their weekly allowance from Mr. Jawkins.

"Now, Corkey, see that my things are all off, and make sure nothing is left behind, and when we get to Baltimore, have the big trunk and those two baskets taken to the theater the first thing in the morning—dy're hear?"

"Kerect," answered Corkey—"Kerect. me lad!"

"Did you ever have a speaking part on the stage?"

"A wat?"

"A speaking part—little bit, you know."

"Wot play is little bits in, sir?" queried Corkey.

"Why, you ought to know what I mean."

"Maybe I ought, but I don't."

"Well, could you go on for a little part of eight or ten lines?"

"Oh, I see now, one of them fellers wat says 'melord the kerridge waits, en the bankit's ready.'"

"Precisely—that's it."

"Well, I never got that far along in the profession."

"Could you do it?"

"Rayther. Jes' you try me. I kin spout trag-edy 'mong the boys. Didn't I do ole' Sparty-cus down in Bayard Street till the boys howled. You kin jest bet, boss, when de boys 'round the Bowery git up and put a feller down as good, he kin take up his keerds and pass anywhere for a lone hand."

"Oh, ho," said Jawkins, "you understand stripping the paste-boards, eh?"

"I kin do a little at euchre and blind poke."

"Beware, my boy, of the painted papers. Behind there stalks the headsmen! ha! ha!" and Mr. Jawkins having delivered this in a sepulchral tone which almost made Johnny's hair stand on end, laughed as only a tragedian of the Jawkins stamp can laugh when pleased with his own fun.

In due time they were rattled off by the cars on their way to Baltimore.

When they reached the city of monuments, Jawkins betook himself to his hotel, and Corkey with a direction given him by the tragedian went to a sort of half hotel, half restaurant, in Pratt Street near Light.

Corkey discovered that it was called The Green House.

And in a day or two that nearly all the restaurants and drinking places were called green houses.

That afternoon there was a rehearsal of Jawkins' first night's play at the Holliday Street Theater, and as a matter of course Corkey was on hand.

"Them supers is awful looking guys," said Corkey to Johnny as he "gunned" them from the wings, rehearsing under their captain.

"That's a nice lookin' cap'n of supes, he is," remarked Johnny. "Look at them legs; my! a telegraf wire stuck inter a pair of tights'd stretch 'em more than fellow's shanks."

Corkey grinned:

"Can't be stuff 'em?"

"Stuff, pad a goose quill, kin you? They're wus'n the Philadelphia legs."

Corkey was studying, as he watched the rehearsal. He was yearning for a racket. "Suthin' with fun in it."

Jawkins was spreading himself about the stage directing the rehearsal.

Corkey had his eye upon him.

"I've got it," said Corkey to himself. "I've got it dead sure."

"What air you lookin' so jolly good natured about, oh?" asked Johnny.

"Oh, nothin' much, only we'll have some fun to-night ef I know myself; I think I do. I say, Johnny, after rehearsal is over I'm goin' to git a whistle."

"A what?"

"A whistle."

"A—a—wissel?"

"Yes. Did ye hear that prompter's whistle just now?"

"In course I did?"

"Kin you remember a sound?"

"When I hear it, I kin, 'specially a dinner bell."

"Well, jest you take in the grip on yer ear of that prompter's whistle, and don't you forget it neither."

"All right, my covey," said Johnny.

"What I wants is a whistle that'll sound as near like that as kin be. Now jest you listen."

"I will, I will."

They listened—both of them.

"Now then," said Jawkins, "change scene."

The prompter blew his whistle.

"I've got it," said Johnny.

"Kerect," replied Corkey, "you've got a ear fur music wich I haven't. Bully for you."

After rehearsal was over Corkey and Johnny sallied out in search for a whistle.

Wandering through Pratt Street, they found in a little store a collection of whistles.

Johnny listened while Corkey tried them one after another, but somehow none of them seemed to strike Johnny as having the right sound.

The shopkeeper became disgusted.

"What's the odds?" he said. "They're all alike. There ain't one of them that don't blow—and they're only two cents."

Johnny tried another lot himself with the same success—failure.

"What sort of a whistle do you want?" asked the shopkeeper.

"Suthin the same as a prompter's whistle?"

"Oh." The shopkeeper took out a lot from another drawer. "There's what you want," he said—"and there's a pea in each one to make it tremble."

The first one that Johnny tried was a success.

"That's the kind. It's a twin to that other one."

Price five cents, which sum was paid, and away they went, Corkey keeping the whistle.

"Now you got it, wot are you going to do with it?" asked Johnny.

"I'll show you to-night," was Corkey's answer; "and you'll see the liveliest time these Baltimore fellers ever run into."

"All right."

Night came and so did Corkey and his little game.

The performance commenced. Corkey stationed himself in one upper entrance, and Johnny in another on the opposite side.

There was a funny man in the play—a comic servant, always suggesting little games and getting into trouble with them.

This character was personated by a tremendous fat actor, who looked, as he waddled about the stage, like a prize pig at an agricultural fair.

He was so fearfully and wonderfully fat that almost every other word he uttered was a cross between a wheeze and a grunt.

He appeared to be a great favorite with the audience in the parquette, but the boys in the upper tier didn't take to him for a cent.

They "guyed" him at every opportunity.

Protected by the favor of the parquette, however, he took the quizzing of the boys good naturedly, and wheezed and grunted and shook his fat sides all the more.

Corkey grinned all over, and softly said to himself: "That fat feller's my mutton, sure."

In the second scene of the first act, "the baron's great hall" after Jawkins in his "great part" of *Rodolph*, the unknown knight of the cross of blood, rushes off howling for revenge upon the abductors of *Seraphine*, the baron's servants hold a meeting and the fat one proposes a game of blindfold.

The handkerchief was tied over his eyes, and he began fumbling about the center of the stage, making great pretense of falling over chairs and tables.

Then he felt his way down the stage.

Corkey blew his whistle just as the fat chap was opposite the second grooves, when the next change of scene was to occur.

The scene-shifters hearing the whistle and thinking all was right rushed on a pair of flats which, precisely as Corkey had calculated, closed together, catching the fat comedian between them, giving him in back and stomach, a tremendous punch.



The scene-shifters rushed on a pair of flats, which closed together, catching the fat comedian between them.

"Godalmighty!" he wheezed—the wind so fairly knocked out of him that he dropped down like a huge bag of flour upon the stage with a squelch that made the big drum in the orchestra groan.

While Fatty was kicking, Corkey ran up from behind, caught him by the leg and gave it two or three awful jerks which made him fairly yell.

"Let go me!"

The scene shifter ran back the flats; the prompter flung his arms about and round with rage at the condition of affairs.

The boys in the gallery roared and hissed and cat-called, and stamped as if they were a tribe of Sioux Indians on the war-path.

It was worse than three lunatic asylums and two menageries let loose in a ten acre lot, with a mad bull thrown in to make things lively.

"Git a derrick and histe him up!"

"Blow 'im up!"

"Roll 'im over!"

"Bile 'im down fur his hide and taller!"

"Stan' 'im on his head!"

"Jack Screws 'll pitch 'im!"

"Let him up on the long alley."

And a score of other similar suggestions were shouted down by way of advice from the gallery.

Jawkins, as the unknown knight, danced in and out of the entrances, looking wild enough to tear the whole theater down.

"The infernal blundering beer tub—I'll knock the stuffin' out of him!"

The fat victim of Corkey's whistle finally regained his feet, and amid the uproar, the scene-shifters ran the flats back so that the scene could go on until finished.

"Why in thunder did you whistle that scene off before it was time?" demanded Jawkins, seriously of the prompter.

"I didn't whistle it off."

"Yes, he did," said one of the scene-shifters, "er I wouldn't have run on the flat."

"Can't I hear? D'ye think I don't know the sound of a prompt whistle when I hear it, you lunkhead?" said Jawkins.

"But I didn't touch my whistle."

"It blowed itself maybe," sneered the scene shifter as he turned away.

"Well, I—"

"You're an idiot!" cried Jawkins, "I'm cussed if you've got brains enough to get in when it rains."

"You have just enough, and that's all!" retorted the prompter who was now beginning to get his back up.

Just then the call boy interrupted the row by calling Jawkins to go on the stage, which Jawkins immediately did.

Corkey had been taking all this in, and he and Johnny were ready to yawp with laughter.

"Now, Johnny," said Corkey, just before the curtain went up on the second act, "you git over there in the second entrance and in the middle of the scene blow yer whistle, and then skip behind that pile of old boxes, and I'll tend to the rest of the fun. We'll give 'em all the whistles they want."

"Isn't that air prompter just wild, eh, Corkey?"

"Didn't old Fatty git into it nice?"

Up went the curtain. Jawkins was in the midst of a love scene with the baron's daughter, and letting off a blazing old speech, when Johnny gave a blow at his whistle.

There was a rush of the scene-shifters, and before Jawkins knew what was coming he was shut in out of sight of the audience just as he was in the middle of his speech. The prompter threw down his book and plunged up the stage behind the entrances.

"Where's the fiend that blowed that whistle. Run back them flats you blasted lunks," cried the prompter.

As the prompter bolted up the stage, Corkey slipped down to the prompt place and gave the wire leading up to the curtain bell a pull, and then, unnoticed in the row over the unexpected change of scene, got away into the next entrance unseen.

In a moment, to the utter astonishment of the people on the stage, and to the unbounded delight of the boys in the gallery, down came the curtain.

Then there was a row.

Such tremendous swearing had never before been heard in that theater—or perhaps anywhere else.

"It's a cussed conspiracy!" roared Jawkins, whacking his fists together. "A vile plot, and I know it."

"I'll give a hundred dollars to find out who rung that curtain down in the middle of the act!" cried the now thoroughly exasperated prompter.

"I'm bettin' he hasn't got 'nough money to buy his morning nip," grinned Corkey.

"And if he has, it's borried from some other feller," added Johnny.

"Boy," said the prompter to Corkey, "did you hear that whistle?"

"I reckon I did."

"Do you know who did it?"

"What?"

"Who blew the whistle?"

"Not knowin' the sound of one feller's breath from another's I can't take my 'davy as to who blowed it."

"You're a fool!" and the prompter left Corkey.

"I may be a fool," said Corkey to Johnny, "but I'm derved ef I'm as big a one as that air prompter."

"I'd punch the wretch's head," wheezed the fat low long black domino or cloak, which, fastening at the throat, reached to her feet—thus concealing the dress comedy man, wiping a few pints of oily perspiration from his face by a dexterous twist of his fingers over it.

"Wot a punch that'd be, hey?" quizzed Johnny.

While all this was going on behind the scenes the uproar in front was at its height.

Cries for "Jawkins! Jawkins!" were heard.

"I'll see 'em hung, drawn and quartered before I'll go out," said Jawkins. "Turn the lights down and give 'em a grind with the music. Blast Baltimore, anyhow!"

And with a tragedy stride, and his face twisted into a melo-dramatic expression of contempt, he left the stage and went into the green-room.

As he passed the call boy he frightened that precocious youth with such a diabolical leer and a "bah—h!" that he fell back over a coal-box and came within half an inch of pitching headforemost down stairs.

Among the ladies of the company was Miss Leoline Scuffin, who did the young and suffering heroines.

She wasn't pretty. On the contrary she was slightly cross-eyed, had a turn-up nose, and a neck which Corkey said looked like "one of them pocket corkscrews, wick the more you looked at it, the longer it got."

She was in love with the fat comedian, and it didn't take Corkey long to find it out.

"If ever she gits that feller," said Johnny, "I pities him, I does."

"Wy?" said Corkey.

"Cos it's 'er put up job."

"A wot?"

"A reglar do. She's a woolin him, she is. She wants to git him, and bile him down inter lard. There's a barril of it inter him."

Now Miss Scuffin was thin, long, and as angular as a Cape Cod cow in the winter time, and at the best her voice wasn't any more pleasant to the ear than that of a croupy cat.

But she was a dresser. She got herself up in style.

She hated the supes, and abominated boys.

Therefore she frowned upon Corkey and glared at Johnny.

The supes had nicknamed her "Rattlebones."

When she and the fat mountain of a comedian were standing side by side the pair looked like Famine and Plenty.

In the fourth act she had a change of appearance to make, or what is called a "quick change" of dress.

In this instance the change was from that of the be-

guiled daughter of the haughty baron to the "veiled mystery in black."

All she had to do was to run off the stage, put on a underneath. Also a wig of long black hair fallin' nearly to her waist.

The domino and wig were left by her, in her haste to get on the stage in Corkey's care.

"Stand right here," she said. "Don't move, and keep them ready for me. I'll only have one minute to make my change in."

"Kerect, mum," answered Corkey with a twinkle of his nether eye which meant mischief.

"The ole gal's got a wig on now. Guess her natural stock of hair isn't very hefty," said Johnny.

Now, it so happened that the fat comedy man came tumbling off the stage a moment before the baron's daughter made her exit in the entrance, where stood Corkey, with the domino and wig.

In staggering or tumbling off into the entrance, he rolled up against Corkey, accidentally, of course, and not only by the sudden collision knocked off his own wig, which was fiery red, with the hairs standing straight up—but who jostled Miss Scuffin's wig from Corkey's grasp, so that both wigs fell together to the floor.

"What are you blocking up the entrance for?" puffed the fat man, stooping for his wig.

"Ef I was as big as you air, maybe I might block up within more'n this entrance," retorted Corkey.

"Shut up, impudence."

The fat man picked up his wig and waddled off. Corkey picked up the other wig.

"My eyes, here's fun," exclaimed Corkey.

"Wat's up."

"See this wig."

"Of course."

"That air big tub's goin' off with that woman's wig and left his own one—by Moses—Johnny, here she come."

So she did.

She made a heroic rush off the stage from the unhallowed clutches of the double dyed villain of the play, to make the changes.

"Here they are, Maria," said Corkey with a grin. "Here's the wig and here's the domino."

It was dark in the entrance. She took off the wig she had on—one full of curls and little beauty frizzes—and put on the red standing haired wig left by the fat man, threw the domino over her shoulders, buttoned it at the throat and in a moment after got her cue to go on.

She made a Meg Merriles rush.

"Oh, ho, dark phantom. Again we meet, I the mystery, and you the sordid man of crime—ha! ha! ha!"

Instead of a roar of applause, to her utter astonishment, there was a tremendous roar of laughter from the audience.

And the double-dyed villain instead of putting on an expression of horror, puffed out his cheeks and made frightful grimaces in his endeavor to choke down the laugh.

That fat comedy man's wig was irresistably ludicrous. It made his thin face look like the tied up end of a huge mop, or like the butt of a feather duster.

She couldn't imagine what on earth everybody was laughing at.

She stopped stock still, and turned her face full toward the audience.

This made them roar still louder.

"Isn't that high," said Corkey to Johnny.

"High ain't no word for it."

"Won't she give you rats when she gits off though."

"I guess not," said Corkey.

At that moment, one of the supes came into the entrance.

Corkey saw his chance.

When he saw a chance Corkey never let it slip.

"Here, you feller," said Corkey, "I est hold Miss Scuffin's wig, will yer, while I run over an' see wat Jawkins wants?"

The unsuspecting supe took the wig and stood looking off on the stage.

Corkey and Johnny quietly cleared out of that entrance in double quick time.

While Miss Scuffin stood for the moment dumbfounded at the result of her tragic rush, the double-dyed villain after recovering from choking down a fit of laughter, said in a low tone:

"Scuffin, it's your wig."

Even then she did not understand.

The villain made a step nearer. "Scuffin, it's your wig—it's awful."

Then, bewildered and unconscious of what she was doing, she, to his utter amazement, put up her hand and lifted the wig from her head, and gave it one glance.

That settled the audience. It also settled her.

And it completely upset the remorseless double-dyed villain who crammed his fist into his mouth and rushed off.

She held the wig in her hand for a second, and then dropped it as if it were a red-hot horse shoe.

It wasn't her wig. It was the wig of that wretch of a fat comedian.

She uttered a little shriek, gave a gasp and reeled off the stage into the entrance where the unlucky supe stood who had taken Corkey's place.

As she did so, the prompter blew his whistle, and the audience was somewhat quieted by the change of scene.

Miss Scuffin grasped that supe like a tigress, and

shook him back and forth till he began to think his head was a ball swinging on a string.

"Wa—wa—don't—I wa—"

"You miserable little wretch, I'll shake the life out of you—you—I'll have you arrested you"—but in her wrath her power of speech gave place to more shaking.

Corkey had come across the stage, and was looking on enjoying the racket as only he could.

"Who put you up to it, eh?—you—you"—another frightful shake.

Corkey slipped up close to her:

"Mum, it was the fat feller. I saw him take your wig from that feller, mum, and give him his."

When she heard this, she stopped the supe who, limp from the fearful shaking he had received, wilted up against a wing post.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed, grasping the wigs.

"Yes, mum, an' I seed old butter tub do it too, mum," added Johnny.

The idea that he, her chosen one, the corpulent target at which she had pointed her affection and love, should play her such a trick, was a crusher.

Meanwhile the innocent fat man was quietly waiting in the green-room for his next scene, and thinking of the jolly supper he and his adored Scuffin were to have after the performance, on their way home.

The indignant, outraged Miss Scuffin hurried, with a wig in each hand, to the green-room.

Wildly she confronted him.

He looked up astounded at the spectacle she presented.

"Mister Baggs," she exclaimed, "do you see what you've done!"

He looked but didn't see.

"What's the matter, my dear Scuffin?" he asked.

"Don't dear Scuffin me, after this vile, unmanly trick."

"She's off her nut," ejaculated Baggs.

"Been drinking!" suggested her rival, the juvenile lady.

"Poor thing, tantrums again," said the light comedian.

"Wretched trickster, to bring ridicule upon a poor woman who—who—" here she changed her tune, and threw the wigs into the fat face of her adored one.

"Ugh, you brute!" and rushed away.

Corkey danced with delight. Jawkins, that night went to his hotel drunk as a lord. When anything went wrong he always got over it by getting tight. There having been something wrong in one way or another ever since he engaged Corkey, he was chronically drunk every night except Sunday.

That night too, Baggs and Miss Scuffin began a tremendous quarrel which ended, however, in a reconciliation brought about by the explanation that the original cause of the trouble and change of wigs was a mere accident, and not by any device on anybody's part to play a practical joke on Miss Scuffin.

CHAPTER XII.

"SEE here, my boy," said Jawkins to Corkey, "it strikes me that I've had a deal of bad luck in my engagements since I left the Bowery and—"

"Why, boss," interrupted Corkey, "ain't you had the biggest sort of houses, eh? Wy last night was a crusher. The boys was piled a-top of one another."

"Oh," said Jawkins in a self-satisfied tone, "as for that, my name on a bill anywhere is enough to pack the house."

"But it didn't at the Old Bowery," thought Corkey.

"It isn't the houses, my boy. They've been all right enough. It's the nightly interruption to the performance. There hasn't a night passed that there hasn't been a row of some sort. Now I can't stand it much longer. It's rough. It's death to the drama."

Corkey cocked his eye up at the "great tragedian."

"I wonder if he thinks it's me!" queried Corkey to himself, "it kinder has that look."

"Yaas," answered Corkey. "Yaas, it is hard on the dramer, but you see it's the fault of them sticks wot calls themselves actors. An' then there's the supes—they is awful—puffectly awful. That last lot of fellers wasn't no better'n so many chunks of wood, boss."

"It's terrible," said Jawkins lighting a fresh cigar.

"Now see here, when we get to Washington I want you to keep an eye on the people on the stage and if you hear any of 'em hatching up any trouble let me know of it."

"Of course, boss."

"And wot'll be their lot if I catch 'em at it. I'll let 'em know that Jawkins is not to be trifled with. 'Now get you ready, gentle youth, to journey hence,' said Jawkins airily, "and here is a ducat or two for thee."

Corkey held out his hand and Mr. Jawkins placed in it the weekly wages of his dresser.

"Take it—go to a foreign land and be happy, and in the happiness of the per-resent, forget the misery of the pawst an' think only of a gullories fuchaw."

With these words and a wave of his hand Jawkins went his way.

Corkey went out and found Johnny sitting on the outside steps chaffing a bootblack.

"You're a snoozer, you air," said Johnny to the bootblack, "you ain't no professional shiner up. Wy ther ain't nothin' of the artist 'bout yer."

"Taint nothin' to you wot I is," retorted the bootblack slinging his box over his shoulder.

"It's suthin' to everybody wot wears leather. It's

sich country duffers as yer that knocks bizness higher en Gilderoy's kite. You ain't no good. N. G. Yer wants tu go wid some fust-class shiner fur an appren-tiss an learn the bizness, an git in all the fine tetches, so wen yu tackles a gen'l'man's hoof yer kin git over it lively."

"You be blowed!"

"Wot's thet," said Johnny, getting up from the step.

"Wot's thet last obseruation?"

"Yer're a snide, you air," said the bootblack defiantly.

"I'm a—a wot!"—here Johnny doubled up his fists.

"Look here, you feller, I just want you to know I don't skeer for a cent."

"I've a notion to bust your gourd."

"Ef I can't black a boot, I can black your eye, my fine fellar."

Johnny braced himself. The honor of the Bowery was at stake. The idea of a Baltimore bootblack thinking he could warm him was too much for Corkey's right bower.

Johnny, having braced himself, struck an attitude, "I'm a snide, am I? Mebbe I am. Now then, young feller, jest you put up yer fly mashers an' I'll show yer how we open oysters in de Bowery widout a knife. Now look out fer yerself."

The bootblack wasn't afraid, and didn't back out an inch.

Johnny danced around him, dodging and ducking his head, and throwing up his arms as if he were as full of fight as a whole army of Turks.

"Why don't yer pitch in—say?" roared Johnny.

"Pitchin' in isn't my gait. I ain't no Jack Heenan, but I can take keer of myself—jest you lay yer bottom dollar on to that."

"Oh, I'd jest like to give yer one on desnoot."

"Hit a cripple, would yer?"

"I'd hit anythin'," said Johnny, dancing about like a parched pea in a hot griddle, as if he were boiling over for a fight.

"See here, snide," said the bootblack lifting his box by the strap from his shoulder and sitting down upon it as unconcerned as if everything was as pleasant and agreeable as a summer's day—"see here you, I've just got up from a sick bed over at de horsepittel an' I ain't in no shape fur to lick you. I'll ketch you some day and make it hot fur yer, bet."

"Yer sick, air you?" sneered Johnny; "an' wot's the little differkilty! Tisn't gout air from high livin' air Heider pipesick cider, hey!"

"No tain't nuthin of that sort. It wus'n gout."

"Maybe it's yer stuffin'?"

"Tis nothin of that kind."

"Well then it's a dodge tu git away thout gittin' punched."

"Taint," said the bootblack, grinning.

Johnny danced up close to the young Sitting Bull.

"Well, young duffer, yer air a cool one, yer air."

"Doctor told me to keep cool."

"Wat is yer little complaint—eh?"

"I'm just gittin' over it."

"Well wat were it wen you did have it good an' strong?"

"Oh nothin'—only the small-pox, an—"

"W-o-t!" Johnny backed off ten or fifteen feet, "der wat?"

"Small-pox."

Johnny turned, pulled his hat down over his eyes, threw up his head, and then saw Corkey standing a little way off looking at the scene.

"None of it fur me. I kin fight, an' I'd like ter guv that snoozer a reglar jaw lifter, but I'm derved if I'm goin' ter tackle de small-pox—not if my hed's level."

"Hello, Johnny, what's the rub now, eh?"

"Nothin'—only we'd better git away a mile or two from that feller—he's got 'em bad."

"Got what?"

Johnny told him.

"An' haint you never bin waxinated—punched in the arm with a doctor's jabber?"

"In course not."

"Well I hev. So I ain't afeared of no little sick of that sort."

"You ain't?" cried Johnny.

"No I ain't."

"Well s'pose you give that snoozer a histe fer me, won't yer?"

"Taint none of my funeral, Johnny," said Corkey. Then he told Johnny of Jawkins' idea of matters and things.

"An' I was 'traid he had tumbled to my rackets, an' was goin' to give us the grand bounce, but he didn't. If he knowed though—jimeney wouldn't he lift us."

"That would be rough onto two orphlins like us, into a strange town an' nary a red to stan' on."

"Wat. Why we've got scads—see here. That's our week's plum duff." And Corkey showed him the money.

"But we're safe. We skips to Washington, Johnny, this afternoon."

"Sure?"

"Sure pop."

And to Washington they went.

When Corkey got into Washington his first idea was, as he got a sight of the capital dome was given to Johnny.

"Derved if this town don't look like a little old man covered up with a big Busby hat. Ef this is a theayter town I'm a donkey."

"It's spread out enuff fur a dozen shows," said Johnny.

It was in the morning when they arrived in the presidential city, so by order of Mr. Jawkins they proceeded at once to Ford's Theater, where the "boss," as they



And then Corkey fairly jumped with delight. The carpenter jumped with another sort of feeling.

discovered by the fences and bill-boards, was to make his appearance.

Rehearsal had been called, and was under way when they reached the theater.

Jawkins at once proceeded to make his presence known, and to direct the play.

While he was doing this Corkey took a survey of the premises from one of the entrances.

While engaged in this laudable occupation a puffy-faced stage carpenter very roughly turned Corkey around.

"Here, said Corkey, 'who'r yer twistin', say? I ain't no corkscrew, I ain't."

"Cheeky, what are you doin' here; get off this stage."

"Guess not. I ain't one of them kind."

"Git off or I'll kick you out."

"You're a kicker, air you? Let me see yer ears."

The stage carpenter wasn't used to being talked to in that manner. He got mad.

"Don't bile over," said Corkey, "till yer sure yer fire'll hold in."

The carpenter made a grab at Corkey.

Corkey dodged, and the carpenter's hand, big enough for the rudder of a man-of-war ship, went bolt into the face of one of the ballet girls, who at that moment came up behind Corkey.

"You brute!" she screamed at the top of her voice, as she fell back against the wing, and then not very gracefully sat down and uttered another little scream.

Corkey, in dodging the carpenter, jumped back, or rather out upon the stage, where two other carpenters were sliding one of the flats or large scenes, across the stage.

In jumping out of the way he went full tilt against one of those scene-shifters so unexpectedly, and with such force, that it staggered him and caused him to let go his hold of the flat.

Being thus held up only on one side, it flopped over from the other man's grasp, and came over flat-wise down the stage.

Here was more trouble.

Down it came, a painted castle and battlements upon Jawkins and two or three men and women who were rehearsing just below.

Jawkins standing with his back to it, of course couldn't get out of the way and the center of it struck him in the head with such force, that his head went through the old rotten canvas.

"Damn it!" he roared, as his head protruded through the cloth castle.

"Good gracious!" cried the woman.

"What're yer about?" yelled one of the men whose head didn't go through the cloth but who was wrestling his way out from beneath.

Corkey put himself in the opposite side of the stage and grinned like a Chinese mandarin.

"Put me out, eh?" he said to Johnny.

Meanwhile the stage carpenter against whom Corkey had stumbled or jumped and the carpenter who wanted to put him out had got into a wrangle.

"What'd you shove that boy agin me for?"

"I didn't; the kid jumped agin you to dodge me."

"Oh, that's thin. I saw you."

"You didn't."

"You did."

And so they did and didn't until the stage manager came up and settled the row by threatening to discharge them both.

Put up to it by Corkey, Johnny crossed over to the stage manager.

"I say, mister, I know wot kicked up the row."

"Well, what?"

"I seed him. That big feller hit that bally gal plum in de face wid his fist."

"The brute, to strike a woman." The stage manager turned to the ballet girl who didn't seem very badly hurt, and was engaged in wringing her head-gear.

"Yes, sir," she said, spitefully "Jim did hit me."

"The vagabond—I'll—ah, here he is. Jim come here. Did you hit this girl?"

"No—yes," stammered the carpenter, "that is you see I was just going—"

"There you've said enough. No man shall remain in my theater who will deliberately strike a woman. No, sir."

"But—"

"It's no use, the man who stammers is lost. Shan't want you after Saturday."

At that moment the carpenter's eye rested upon Corkey who was laughing all over.

"Blast that boy—I'll smack him for this," and he made a rush for Corkey.

But he didn't get him. Catching Corkey when he didn't want to be caught was the next thing to impossible.

Joe made a break in back of the wings, and down toward the prompter's desk, and then took a short turn around the proscenium out upon the stage—where he knew the wrathful carpenter would not care to trouble him.

The fallen canvass castle was raised up, and after Jawkins had brushed the dust from his face and poked his mashed hat into something near its original shape he went on with the rehearsal, but in an awful bad humor.

The rehearsal went wrong; nothing seemed to go right that day.

Nobody knew a line of their parts, and the heavy villain had gone out between times so often that before they reached the last act, he was as full of the next door gin as a goat, sat down on a set rock, and immediately fell fast asleep.

The low comedy man had a tremendous toothache, and his head was tied up in a swath of handkerchiefs.

The sharp-nosed old lady of the company had a violent cold in her head, and there was plenty of room for it in that locality.

Jawkins felt faint over the prospect.

It looked as though there would be trouble in the wigwam.

"Corkey," said Mr. Jawkins, in his most sepulchral, buzz-saw voice.

"Sir," answered Corkey.

"Come hither, boy—prithree a word."

Corkey stepped up to him.

"I've hithered, boss."

"I'm afraid we're going to have a hard night of it."

"I'm thinkin', boss, them fellows wot fills up the play'll have the hardest time. They're all drunk."

"Buddy!"

"Well, it's all the same."

"Got your supers all right?"

"I'll bet I have," was Corkey's answer.

"Then by all the gods, let em' rip," exclaimed Jawkins.

"Come early for my basket."

"Early it is, sir."

Then Jawkins strode off, and Corkey and Johnny remained upon the stage a while to take in the situation.

"I'd like to git the best of that air carpenter again," mused Corkey. "He's a snide which ain't worth the heft of the dirt he treads on, damn him."

He noticed that the carpenter had a favorite seat.

It was an old cottage chair—with a stuffed bottom. The chair was at the back of the stage in a dark corner. When not busy the carpenter sat down in it and indulged in a quiet half hour's snooze.

"I'll ketch him, see if I don't," said Corkey, meditating.

While Corkey stood grinning at the chair it so happened that the carpenter put on his coat and went out.

"He's gone for a drink," thought Corkey.

And in this surmise Corkey was right.

When the carpenter had disappeared Corkey went over to the chair and examined it.

Then an idea struck him.

The bottom of the cushion sunk down from long use the weight of its sitter.

Corkey searched about for a stick the right length.

Presently near the property room door he found one.

This he placed upright under the center of the chair

CHAPTER XIII.

one end resting upon the floor and the other beneath the cushion. It raised the bottom of the soft sagging chair seat.

Having arranged this to his entire satisfaction, Corkey followed by Johnny left the theater.

"Won't he bounce when he sets hisself down on that cushion and finds it ain't soft for a cent."

"Mebbe it'll hurt him?"

"He'll be more skeered than anythin' else. He'll git up, you kin bet, suddin'."

At night they came to the theater early.

To Corkey's astonishment the chair and the upright stick remained as he had left it.

Evidently the carpenter had not returned as was expected. Corkey laughed.

"It'll make a rumpus to-night, Johnny, ef he's here," was Corkey's remark.

At the regular time the performance began. Corkey was standing near the property room door.

From where he stood, looking up across the stage he could see the chair.

The curtain was up, Jawkins in his "great original creation, Bangbaric the Brigand," was striding the stage and bellowing a speech of death to the whole human race, his enemies especially.

The brigands were grouped about the stage as is usual with brigands everywhere.

The Count Malfi bound hand and foot and secured to a very small post by a cartload of chains was glaring defiance at the boss brigand while opposite him the Navelly Donna De Guzman the betrothed of the captured count leaned sorrowfully, also as a captive, against a set tree guarded by a bandy-legged brigand whose head looked like a painted war club.

It was an effective tableau, and the crowded gallery (Jawkins always had a big gallery) and the lower circles were sitting in breathless suspense awaiting the result.

Corkey had his eye fixed upon that carpenter's chair and not upon the scene.

Jawkins howled on, the captive count rattled his chains, the disconsolate Donna Guzman shed tears and fondled her loose front hair, expressing her despair, and the brigands loafed in picturesque style about the stage, when —

"There he goes," Corkey involuntarily exclaimed, half aloud.

"Who goes?" said the property-man, overhearing Corkey.

Corkey turned his eye but for an instant, and answered "Nothin'."

But there was something going.

It was that carpenter. Corkey saw him going up behind the flats.

Corkey shifted his position so that he could get a better sight of the coming form.

The carpenter, in his shirt sleeves and apparently well ballasted with beer, went up and around to the chair.

He glanced about him for a moment before he sat down.

Then down he went.

And then Corkey fairly jumped with delight.

The carpenter jumped with another sort of feeling.

He uttered a howling cuss word in a tone four degrees louder than Jawkins' roar, and shot straight up to a perpendicular, clapped his hands behind him much quicker than he would have done had he been suddenly and unexpectedly kicked and made a rush forward.

Losing his balance, and trying to recover it, whirled around and came bang up against a pile of chairs which was placed in the entrance for use in the farce.

Over went the pile of chairs with the bewildered carpenter wrestling and struggling among and in the midst of them, out upon the stage in the midst of the brigands in full view of the audience.

The brigands bounced up to their feet, the Donna Guzman uttered a little scream, and then went off in a fit of laughter, and Jawkins stood dumbfounded at this new interruption.

The gallery boys roared, the people below laughed and screamed, and hissed, and the uproar was complete.

To settle the fun Corkey ran down to the prompt place, and as nobody was there (the prompter having run up the stage to see what the trouble was) he gave the curtain bell a couple of jerks and down came "the rag."

That ended that act.

The stage carpenter walked the rest of the week as if there was gravel in his shoes.

"I'd just give all I kin make in a year to know the feller that fixed that cussed stick in under that cheer. Ef I'd leave a whole bone into his body may I be —" What else he added it isn't worth while to mention here.

Corkey and Johnny had their fill of fun that night. But wasn't Jawkins wild?

The rest of the performance went off as gently as could be expected.

For the next two or three nights nothing occurred.

Corkey was looking for a chance for another jolly racket.

"If I don't have a night soon I'll spile," he said.

But he didn't "spile."

For on the last night of Jawkins' appearance in Washington he had a chance and he didn't lose it.

Not only one but another which followed it on the same night.

It was as Johnny afterwards said, "a reglar ole buster."

"I say, Johnny," said Corkey, as the two were wandering together up Pennsylvania Avenue, "I should like to get another whack at that air stage carpenter."

"I guess we kin set him off again. But I'm thinkin', Corkey, yer ain't goin' to git him to drop hisself into a cheer wid a cushioned bottom again this side o' Christmas."

"Maybe he won't. Well, we'll see. Yere know we skips ter Pittsburg to-morrer?"

"Wat?"

"Thet's ther ticket. Jawkins don't like Washington fur a cent."

"Maybe it's Washington that don't like him for mor'n a nickel. It's a way sum' of these here country towns have."

"Wat time's rehearsal comin' orf, Corkey?"

"Not 'fore 'leven."

"We's got lots of time. S'pose we histe ourself up inter that air big bildin' were they've got them curiosities an' props an' things—wot's that they call it, eh?"

"You mean the paytent office."

"Yes, that's the office—s'pose we take it in jes' for a flyer."

"Kerect," answered Corkey.

On they went accordingly.

"I don't see nothin' in this avenoo," said Johnny.

"Tain't nothin' to the Bowery. Wy ther ain't 'nuff people into it to keep a circus side show open."

"Lots of people here in the dead o' winter when them ere congress nob's and po-litikal fakers git in here you bet."

"I seed de president yisterday," said Johnny. "Leastway that's wot one of the boys said which pointed him out. He was a slouchin' down wid some gray-headed old chap and he didn't look like nothin'."

"He's the boss head of the heap—you—"

"Boss," interrupted Johnny. "Wy ain't he got his unerform onto him when he goes out? He hadn't nothin' onto him but a old plug hat an' a lot of ol' clothes an' he was a 'mokin' a old butt—jest as if he wasn't any more'n an' other feller. He's a duffer he is."

"Sh!" said Corkey. "Mustn't talk agin de preserdint, Johnny."

"I ain't sayin' nothin' agin de preserdent but it's agin de feller wot's playin' preserdent, an' a fat thing he's got ain't he? He gits big money fur bein' it, don't he?"

"You bet he scoops in a hefty old rake. I say, Johnny—ain't this the spot?"

They were in front of the patent office building.

Up the steps and into the edifice they went.

"Sort of Barnum's Museum—only Barnum is the best by a dern sight," said Johnny.

They got a glimpse of Washington's suit.

"Them's his knee breeches, eh?" said Johnny.

"Well, they ain't nothin' ter see. Lots of 'em in de wardrobe an' better ones too. Kinder think they ain't no good."

"Washington was a great and good man, my boy," said a portly old man standing near, who had heard Johnny's remark, "He was the Father of his Country."

"The wot?" said Corkey, looking up.

"The Father of his Country, my boy?"

"Wot sort of taffy's the old looney a givin' us, Corkey?" whispered Johnny.

"Well," said Corkey, "ef he was the father of his country, I'd jest like to know who's its mother?"

"Poor boys," said the old man, in a pitying tone. "What ignorance!" Then after a moment's pause, he replied: "My children, the country had no mother—the —"

"Oh, pshaw—that's nice puddin' yer givin' us?" interrupted Johnny. "We ain't no country sassage ter be stuffed that way. Ef ole Wash was a father of ennythin', ther must have bin a mother slouchin' round somewhere."

The stout old party stroked his chin, pursed up his lips and walked away.

"Growing up to ruffians," he said to himself; "Government shouldn't let 'em enter the sacred portals of her treasures."

"That old buffer is a little gone in his garret," said Johnny, tapping his head with his finger.

"So, them's Boss Washington's props, eh. Well, they're good enough fer a free show, but they wouldn't draw no money."

"Let's git—kinder light outer here," said Johnny.

"I've seed all I want ter."

"Ke-rect," replied Corkey. "That air museyum over into the Bowery's wuth a truck load of this git up."

"The idea of a museyum wot ain't got no mermaid, ner wax figgers! These here fellers don't know ther fust principils of der show bizness."

Corkey and Johnny left the patent building in disgust.

"Ef wot I've heard is true, old Wash was a putty sharp old chap."

"Were is he now?" asked Johnny, as they went down the steps.

"Wot a fool you air," said Corkey; "wy, he went dead more'n 'so hundred year ago."

"Phew!" exclaimed Johnny. "An' wot'd he die of?"

"Went out inter the appel orchid one day to cut a shinney stick, and killed hisself with his little hatchet."

"Done it wid his little hatchet? An' ef it hadn't been fer that the ole fellow mighta been the father of amuther country or two, mightn't he?"

"He was a good man," said Corkey.

"I heard Jerkey Dick once at de Bowery say that he read somewhere that Wash was a regular old fighter, an' fit plum through the whole Injun wars an' things."

"Yes, an the way he cleared out the Britishers, made 'em sick, you bet. He swum clear cross North River onto a cake of ice, an never froze a toe, Johnny."

"Ner didn't slide off?"

"Nary a slide."

When they got to the theater, rehearsal was over. Jawkins was standing at the stage-door.

"Where've you been, Corkey?"

"A lookin' at old Wash's briches and uthar props," answered Corkey.

"Well, just you go up to my dressing-room, and amuse yourself by looking at my props and packing them up in the basket."

"Bring 'em over to the hotel?"

"Of course."

"Then what'll I do, boss?"

"Do what you please till night. We go to Pittsburg to-morrer."

"Kerect," said Corkey.

"I want you to keep an eye about the stage to-night, and see that the supes are all right, Corkey."

"They're most always all wrong—but I'll tand to 'em, sir."

"There's four or five of them to do the ghosts in my piece."

"Sheets and chalk?"

"Yes. I want you to see that they appear one after the other at the right time, just as I grasp the woman by the hair to drag her into the castle dungeon. Her scream is the cue for the first ghost, and the rest come on slowly at the back. If they are not on at exactly the moment it'll spoil my whole scene. I can't trust that prompter. He was drunk at rehearsal, and it isn't possible that he'll be any more sober to-night. Fact is they're all drunker than goats."

"Kerect."

"Then you understand me; that's all. I must go and look over my part."

Which meant really that Jawkins was about to visit a few beer mills and hold high wassail with sundry old cronies whom he had met since his arrival.

Corkey and Johnny went inside upon the stage.

The supes had all gone. The stage was nearly deserted.

Corkey followed by Johnny went up to Jawkins' dressing-room. After packing the basket with the wardrobe he had used the previous evening Corkey suggested a survey of the flies and matters and things up aloft.

"Jiminy, but it's a dusty old hole," said Johnny. "It kin discount the old Bowery fur clear dirt."

"Kerect every time, Johnny," said Corkey.

Just then Corkey's eye in the semi-darkness of the place caught sight of a bundle.

He not only caught sight of it, but came very near stumbling over it.

"Wot's that!"

"Let's open 'er up and see," said Johnny.

Taking it down into Jawkins' dressing-room they found it to be a well-worn suit of black clothes, pants, vest and coat.

Corkey looked at them a moment, and was on the point of heaving them out, when suddenly an idea struck him.

His face lighted up into a broad grin.

"I've got 'em," he exclaimed.

"Got what?" said Johnny.

"Oh, no, maybe I haven't. Won't we have a racket that'll lay over the deck? You bet."

"Wot's yer little game, Corkey; let's hear it."

"You see them pants and coat?"

"Yes, in course I do."

"Well you'll see fun, you will. Now you git over to that property mattress over there—it's nothin' but a tick anyhow, and fetch a lot of the straw out of it."

Johnny obeyed orders.

Corkey went to work and stuffed out the suit until it looked as nearly like the headless and footless body of a good sized man as could be.

"Wot we want is a head and a pair of old boots."

Corkey made a trip down stairs and after foraging about the stage found a pair of old boots, and in the property room a pasteboard head which had been used in a pantomime. Coming out he saw a large sponge and a pot of rose pink color, which was used to represent blood upon the stage.

He soaked the sponge full in the rose pink, and hurried up to the dressing room.

"Now we'll fix things."

He fastened the boots to the legs of the stuffed figure, fixed the head on, and on the hand and under an old cap, he placed the sponge full of blood.

"Now she's ready," said Corkey. "I'll hide this up there in the flies till night."

"Wot's to be done then?" asked Johnny, still mystified.

"I'll tell you after a while," was the answer.

That night there was a big house, for it was the "last night" of Jawkins. "Positively."

"Ah! ha!" said Jawkins; "this looks like business."

"Yaas!" said Corkey, "ef nuthin happens."

"Well, the money's in, anyhow."

The curtain went up and the play began.



Jawkins struck an attitude, when whack came down upon the stage what seemed to be the body of a man.

Everything went well until the last scene of the first act.

Four or five of the characters were upon the stage. Corkey stood in the second entrance with his eye cocked up aloft.

Looking down upon him from the flies was Johnny, watching Corkey's movements quite as sharply.

Evidently Corkey had his little racket all prepared, and all Johnny wanted was the signal.

Jawkins was spouting away narrating a story of his shipwreck, and how, through all dangers and perils he had treasured the memory of his beloved Maria. The future Maria, in knee breeches and spotted vest and an enormous watch chain and seals was listening, while Maria herself stood apart, looking as innocent and sweet as a spring lamb.

Jawkins struck an attitude.

Corkey lifted his right hand.

When whack came down upon the stage what seemed to be the body of a man.

As it struck, the blood flew out from the head all over.

The horrified audience instinctively rose up and simultaneously uttered a cry of horror and affright.

Corkey leaned back against the wing and shook all over.

Jawkins' arms dropped to his side, and he stood for the moment as motionless as the figure upon the floor.

"It's killed him."

"He's dead."

"Drop the curtain."

"Somebody get a doctor."

"Put the lights up so we can see."

"Oh—oh!" screamed Maria, as she fell back upon a sofa and went off in a dead faint.

"Lift him up."

Down came the curtain.

The excitement of the audience became terrific.

The boys in the gallery fairly howled; women screamed and fainted, and the uproar was equal to that of a wild mob let loose.

On the stage everybody was running hither and thither.

Suddenly the property man, who had just enough of a drunk on board to be afraid of nothing, and one of the supers rushed out.

"Stand aside," said the property man; "let's lift the poor feller up."

He and the super leaned over the body, the super at the head and the property man at the feet.

They grasped it.

Then the super looked at the property man, and the property man glared at the supe, and both of them walked away and never said a word.

Corkey, who was watching the proceedings, had sat down. Johnnie came down from the flies and joined him.

"What'r yer standing there agaping for?" bawled the property man, "at that infernal stuffed dummy for?"

"Sold!" exclaimed Jawkins, "and I'll give my night's receipts for the man who played it."

"Somebody go out and tell the audience nobody's hurt," said one of the company.

"Tell 'em it's a part of the play."

"That be blowed."

Jawkins raved about and almost tore his hair with rage at this last trick.

Corkey came up to him.

"I say, boss," he said, "don't you know who done it?"

"I'd like to know."

"I kin tell you," said Corkey, mysteriously.

"Who was the diabolical wretch?"

"Don't say nuthin'," whispered Corkey, "but I'm dead sure that it was that feller up in the flies."

"Which fellow?"

"Why that curtain man, sir. One of the boys told me he was sure of it."

"Lead me to him."

"Better fetch him down here, sir. Git yer dress all dust up there."

If any of our boys had seen the savage face which Jawkins put on when he gave that "dummy" a tremendous kick, they would have thought it funnier than a pantomime and a dozen farces all rolled into one.

Corkey almost busted himself over the racket.

The audience were making an awful row in front, and even the musicians looked pale.

Finally, under pressure of the stage manager's urging, he went before the curtain and addressed the crowd—or rather tried to:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began.

"Shut up the theater."

"Silence—listen to me one moment," roared Jawkins, waving his arms.

"Is—he—dead?" shouted a hundred voices.

"La-dies an' gen'lemen!" bawled Jawkins at his loudest, "I wish to inform you that —"

"Is—he—dead?" cried that same voice from the gallery.

"Cussed ijts!" growled Jawkins to himself, and then he tried it again.

"Ladies and gentlemen—the man isn't dead!"

This time they heard him.

When they understood that nobody was hurt the boys in the gallery were disgusted.

The idea of having all that excitement for nothing was too much.

So without waiting to hear any more of Jawkins' speech, they set up an ear-piercing, diabolical series of whistling upon their fingers, catcalls, and yells of derision.

Jawkins stood a moment, flung his arms up and then with a sardonic grin upon his face strode off the stage, and the orchestra struck up "Down among the dead men."

While this was going on and just as Jawkins went out before the curtain, one or two of the supes, thinking the dummy was really a man who had pitched over from the flies and killed himself, had ran out through the stage door and spread the story.

Then by the time it had been told and related a dozen of times, the dead man had increased to twenty men killed by the falling of a scaffold on the stage, with a dozen or two wounded.

Three or four men who heard it rushed off to the nearest police station, and with hair standing on end, spun their yarn with all the addition they could think of.

The police captain at once dispatched a posse of a dozen men to the theater, and hired a furniture wagon to take the wounded to the hospital. The police detail took with them three or four stretchers.

The coroner got wind of it, and with three or four doctors followed by half a dozen bummers who made their daily whisky by sitting as coroner's jurymen, started for the theater.

At the stage door all these arrived about the same time, and being legal functionaries the old door-keeper was obliged to let them pass, and pass they did.

And they blindly bolted, stumbled and pushed in.

As they came in, the curtain had just been raised, and the performance of the second act commenced.

The police, doctor, coroner, and his gang of bummers had no more idea of the stage or its ins and outs than they had of the inside of the Mammoth Cave.

Corkey was standing near the inside of the door as they came wildly pushing in.

"Where's the bodies?" asked the coroner, puffing from exertion.

"How many's hurt?" breathlessly inquired one of the policemen.

Corkey took in the situation at once. This was "nuts" to him.

It was heaping fun upon fun.

"Right over there, boss," said Corkey, pointing to one of the entrances. "They're groaning awful—don't you hear 'em?"

They did hear it.

But it was the groaning of the remorseful bandit who had been struck down in the play by Jawkins.

They heard the dismal groan, and waited to hear no more.

They made a wild plunge into the entrance and through it, and in a moment to their utter horror they found themselves in the middle of the stage, with the curtain up and in the presence of the entire audience.

Jawkins and the actors on the stage were dumb-founded by this new interruption.

The actors stared blankly at the police and the policemen halted, stock still like statues.

The audience burst out into a roar of laughter.

The coroner and his bummers for the first time in their lives were abashed and silent.

They saw that they had "put their foot into it."

That they had been hounded, bamboozled "had it played" on them with a vengeance.

The performance of course came to a dead pause.

"Down with the curtain," bawled the stage manager. Instead of ringing down the curtain, the prompter whistled on a couple of flats in the first grooves, and sent on the low comedy man to fill up time and keep the audience half way quiet with a comic song.

"What is this?" demanded Jawkins.

"What d'ye want?"

"Who sent you?"

The latter interesting conundrums were offered by the prompter and stage manager.

The coroner finding that the closing of the scene in front of him had taken the gaze of a thousand eyes and the glare of the footlights from him recovered the use of his tongue.

"Where's the killed?" he asked.

"Trot out yer stiffs," grumbled one of the bumper jurymen.

"We heard that a dreadful accident had happened here," said a policeman.

"Twenty men killed outright and a dozen or two wounded."

"Godelmity!" exclaimed the manager.

"It's a put up job," cried Jawkins.

"A regular swindle."

The coroner looked from one to the other of the policeman as if he was studying whether it wouldn't be best to have somebody knocked on the head just for the sake of making business good in his line.

"This is a nice dodge," said the "boss" policeman. "Nobody hurt."

"Worst of all, nobody killed," sighed the coroner.

"Nor no chance for a set," murmured one of the jurymen.

"Clean the stage, gentlemen," said the prompter.

And at last after much talk back and forth and an immense amount of swearing on the part of Jawkins the policemen, hot and wrathful, the coroner and his gang growling over their hard luck and disappointment were hustled out.

Not, however, until the manager had "tipped" them a soother which had the appearance of a greenback apiece.

After that the performance continued to the end without interruption.

Next morning bright and early, Jawkins followed by the delighted Corkey and Johnny started in the cars for Pittsburgh.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Wor a place this here 'ud be fer perfeshonal chimney sweeps," said Johnny, as he and Corkey left the depot in Pittsburgh, and made their way to the place to which Jawkins had directed them.

"Chimbley sweeps?" answered Corkey: "Wy, they wouldn't have a livin' show."

"Wouldn't they, tho'," said Johnny. "I jest bet they'd git ter be reg'lar millionaires. Demned ef the worry pavements ain't an inch deep with soot. This ain't no place fer ruffled shirts."

"So much the better fer them as hasn't got any," replied Corkey.

"I wouldn't give a chew of terbacker fer the whole caboose. Boss Jawkins ain't goin' to draw his gin money into this place."

"Ain't he? I'm bettin' my hoodle he will, if the posters ain't covered up by the soot 'fore people can get a chance to read 'em."

"I say, mister," said Corkey to a man who was standing on the corner of the street looking at nothing in particular, "kin you tell a feller where Diamond Alley is?"

"I kin," replied the man, glancing at Corkey and Johnny, and then looking off up the street at nothing again.

"Well, if you kin, I'd be 'bliged to you ef you'd tell me."

"I s'pose you would," was the answer.

"Well, mister, s'posin' you do tell me?" persisted Corkey.

"Diamond Alley?"

"Yes."

The man brushed a flake of soot from the end of his

nose, leaving a black mark by the operation, and then gave Corkey and Johnny another glance.

Then he looked away off up the street again at nothing.

"The feller's a looney!" whispered Johnny.

"Air you goin' to tell me?" said Johnny.

"Yes—just drop around here, bub, next week, and I'll let you know."

Corkey's wrath was rising. Johnny was, as he would have expressed it, "bilin'."

"I'd jest like to put a corker onto his snoot," he muttered.

"Ain't you goin' ter tell us?" put in Johnny.

The man looked down at them.

Then he lifted his knuckles and dug out a flake of soot from the corner of his eye, and then brushed something like a tablespoonful of coal dust from his moustache.

"Bub, you want to know where Diamond Alley is, eh?"

"Yes," said Corkey and Johnny in one breath.

"Do you see that air drug store over there?"

"Of course we do."

"Well, you go over there and look into the directory, and if you don't find what you want it ain't no fault of mine. I ain't a directory."

Corkey and Johnny looked at each other.

The man, with a twitch of his forefinger, dusted another spoonful of coal settlings from his moustache, and resumed looking up the street again.

"If that feller isn't cracked, I'm a two-headed Dutchman," said Corkey.

"I'd like to punch him—jest wunst—hit him for his mother—dern him."

"Air you a Pittsbugger?"

"I am."

"Born here?"

The man made no answer. He shook about a pound of coal dust from his hat, put it on, and like a dissatisfied ghost moved silently on up the street.

"If all the rest of 'em here are like that feller, Jawkins had better be gittin' out of the place 'fore he begins," said Corkey.

At last after asking a policeman they got on the right track and found the street—and their lodgings.

This done they went to the theater.

Here they remained until Jawkins came, an hour or two after.

"How d'ye like Pittsburg, Corkey?" he asked.

"I'd like it a good deal better if I wasn't in it."

"It's a first class show town, my boy, smoky as it is."

Jawkins had met them at the stage door, so they followed him in on to the stage.

It was dark in the scenes, and from the stage, the front of the house looked smoky and dark.

"Reglar smoke house," said Corkey.

"Every fellar I've seed into the streets looks like a smoked ham on legs," added Johnny.

Corkey wandered into the green-room. That, too, was dark and smoky as if coal dust and smoke had settled for years over everything.

Three or four of the actors and one actress were sitting about the room, and they had a smoked, dusty look as if they had gone through a regular and long process of being cured.

"I'm derned if it don't beat me," said Corkey.

"Wonder how Jawkins an' us'll look wen we git out of here?"

As this was a conundrum Johnny took it up and answered it.

"We'll jist look like them free lunch herrin's in de Bowery."

"What do you want in here?" asked one of the actors, speaking to Corkey.

"I ain't wantin' you anyhow," said Corkey.

"This is not the supes' room."

"Ain't it? I thought it was when I seen you into it."

"Git out of this."

"Wen I gets good an' ready, an' the weather clears up, maybe I will."

The actor who was a big puffy-faced man with a scraggy moustache which looked loose enough to drop into his mouth the first time he opened it, got up from his seat and lifted his foot.

"I'll show you how to get out," he said.

The foot, clad in a not specially handsome or heavy boot, was lifted, but it struck nothing, and it didn't come down to its original place.

For Corkey had had experience in being kicked out.

But not in being really kicked.

Just as he swung up his foot Corkey grabbed a chair which stood beside him, and placed it quickly in front of him.

The result of this movement was that the puffy actor's foot came down, not to the floor, but his leg remained, caught upon the top of the back of the chair.

Losing his balance upon the other leg by Corkey's little dodge, Mr. Puffy-face "lit" over backwards and his head raked into the lap of the solitary actress.

She was engaged in sewing together some trifles of embroidery and thinking over her part.

When that unexpected plug hat and head struck her lap she was just bringing her needle to the work to make a stitch; and the fright of the moment made her nervously plunge the needle forward, and it jabbed straight into Puffy's face.

He rolled over, clapped his hand to his cheek, uttered a howl and a dozen cuss words in the same breath,

and then bouncing to his feet made a blind bolt for Corkey.

Corkey expected this and dodged out of the doorway. As he went out, in came the call boy for some of the people.

Corkey stood outside to see the fun out.

As the call boy stepped in, the enraged Puffy-face, never noticing the escape of Corkey, grabbed the innocent youth by the coat on both shoulders.

"You infernal, miserable wretch!" he roared, "I'll show you tricks!"

Then he cuffed him with one hand and yanked the breath half out of him with the other.

Then he yanked him down, and savagely tried to wipe up the floor with him.

The victimized call boy yelled and kicked and struggled. The actors sitting around roared with laughter, in which the actress who recovered from the fright assisted.

Corkey and Johnny stood looking on, and enjoying the scene.

The noise and yelling of the suffering call boy attracted the attention of those who were at rehearsal down on the stage, and up they came to see what the row was.

"What's the row?" asked one of the crowd, the first that came up.

"Nothin'," said Johnny, "nothin', only that there big fellow's a beatin' that boy cos he wouldn't turn a flip flap over the big feller's boot."

"Shame!"

"What're you beatin' the boy for?"

The leading man rushed in to the rescue.

He collared Puffy-face just in time to save the boy from a tremendous cuff, and catch it himself under his chin.

His jaw went up so quick that his teeth closed upon the end of his tongue.

Didn't he rip.

He drew back and gave Puffy-face a heavy old soaker with his flat hand over the ear which made him see stars, drop the call boy as if he had been a hot poker.

If all this row wasn't a jolly racket for Corkey he never had one.

Corkey told Jawkins afterwards that the air was "chuck full of coal dust and soot, and didn't them fellers dust each other?"

The call boy got up, shook himself, and blubbering a threat to fix somebody, got out of the green room.

Presently two or three of the actors interfering, the leading man and Puffy-face were separated, both of them blowing like whales.

"Wot'd he put a chair back under my leg for?" growled Puffy-face.

"I didn't," cried the call boy from the outside of the door.

"Who said you did? Another boy?"

"Wot'd he go fer to mop up the floor with me for then?" said the call boy.

"What'd you git in the way for? Why didn't you speak?"

"Why didn't you see?" answered the boy; "I ain't the other boy."

So they had it back and forward. The leading man, when he saw the mistake Puffy-face had made, quietly walked away, and finally everything was satisfactorily settled.

Excepting that Puffy-face didn't feel very comfortable about the spot where that needle had gone into it.

"The idea," he growled as he rubbed his cheek, "of chuckin' a chair back under my leg; it might have broke my neck. If I get my grippers on that cuss of a boy I'll give him a chair back over his idiotic head."

But he didn't.

In a few hours his trouble and the row were only remembered as something to laugh about by the company.

Rehearsal went on after this, quite comfortably, Corkey looking on and keeping his eyes and ears open for the chance of another racket.

"It's better'n than a snake show over in the Bowery," said Corkey.

Corkey was a born joker. Without father or mother living, with nobody in all the wide world to care for him or for him to look to except, perhaps, his chum, Johnny—he looked on everybody as his oyster—to be opened for a joke or as he called it "a high old racket."

To him to-morrow was the same as yesterday—not worth thinking about. To-day was all Corkey wanted, and so long as he got through with it and what fun and "grub" it brought him, he was as contented as a dozen millionaires boiled into one.

And of the same kidney and sort was Johnny, except that Johnny had a mother living.

Where she was he hadn't the remotest idea.

"She runned away one day," was the way Johnny explained this part of his family history; "she skipped off, yer see, whenever dad came home chuck full an' wen she lit out she emptied a wash tub full of soap suds over the guvner, an' tole him that that air water'd be dried up long while 'fore he'd set eyes onto her again. An' dat water dried off wen I wos a four year old kid, and father died off—an' she ain't back yit. I don't think she keered the turn up of a jack in a square deal far me, er she'd a-hunted me up 'fore this. She must be a pretty old gal by this time. Maybe she's scrubbin' winders an' livin' high into

some big brown stone nob's house wid' all de trimmings."

Corkey and Johnny just fitted each other, and so they were brothers, nearer in friendship it may be than if they had been brothers in blood.

As the rehearsal went on, Corkey saw that the puffy-faced man was the one who did the distressed lovers of the cast.

"Wouldn't I like to give him another lift. Wonder ef he wants to fool with chair backs again?"

Jawkins flourished around as usual, ordering the people on the stage and swelling like a damp shirt in a high wind.

"There try that bizness over again," he said to Puffy-face; "it's very particular, you see, because it brings me on. Now, then—don't come down the stage on that side—don't you see, you cursed muttonhead!"

"Mutton head yerself," muttered Puffy-face, as for the tenth time he worried through the motions.

"It's the way with these blasted stars," grumbled the low comedy chap to the 'walking lady.' "They put on more airs and act less than half the supes. They come in here, play a week, scoop in all the money and git out, leavin' us nothin' but the skimmins. The idea of that Jawkins, comin' here as a star. Why, he don't know as much as a hen with its head cut off."

So they grumbled among themselves, but not a word of it to Jawkins or the stage manager.

They knew better than that.

But there were a couple of listeners among the party.

Corkey and Johnny, Corkey in particular.

"Ef they only know'd it, they'd better see a dozen Jawkins' here than have me around," said Corkey.

He noticed that back of the flats in the background which were partly run on, and near the entrance to the green-room there was a large half hoghead full of water, over which there was placed a broad board.

Upon this in the intervals he was not wanted on the stage for rehearsal, Corkey saw Puffy-face spring up and seat himself.

And not uncomfortable was it either.

The height of the hoghead was scarcely three feet, but it was very broad. The water was kept in it in case of fire.

Corkey "gunned" this roost a moment or two, and its occupant.

"By Jinks, I'll do it."

"Do what?" asked Johnny.

"You wait here," was Corkey's reply.

Corkey found his way to the carpenter's room.

There was no one in it.

He looked around and presently found a board as wide and nearly as long as the one laid over the water butt.

Placing the board upon the bench he took a saw and run it across the center of the board, sawing into it until it was sawn almost through.

Turning the board over, it looked as solid as ever.

"That's the kid for me," said Corkey, grinning.

Through the dim light of the back of the stage he came out and down to the water butt.

Puffy-face was on the stage rehearsing.

"That's the ticket," said Corkey.

He quietly and quickly took off the board that was over the top of the water butt, and put in its place the one which he had "fixed."

"Then if he or any of 'em bounce up on that there'll be fun."

He set the old board up against a wing, and then stood off to wait for results.

In a few minutes Puffy-face was through with his scene.

Now he came through the opening between the flats.

Two or three of the company came with him.

"There isn't room in this for more than one, and that's me," he said to the others—"this is my throne; as proud a one as —"

As he said this, with his back against the butt, he placed his hands upon the edge and sprang up to seat himself upon the board.

He did land on the board.

Then came a crash, a splash, a yell and a general rush of everybody up the stage.

The board, as Corkey expected, broke under Puffy's weight, and down he went board and all into the butt of water.

Two or three of the company suggested sending for a hook-and-ladder truck.

Puffy floundered about in the water, half suffocated for a moment or two, and then rose up, looking like a well-soaked pile of rags hung on a beam pole.

"Poof—fuff—stohew!—dammit!" was all the utterance he could make.

He scrambled out, climbed over the edge of the butt upon the stage.

The water ran off from him in streams.

"Take him away, somebody," said the stage manager, "or the stage 'll be swamped."

"What in thunder 'd the cursed idiot want to git in there for," said the prompter.

"He was a sittin' onto that air board, boss," put in Johnny, "an' it busted in the middle and let him down."

Puffy-face hadn't a word to say.

He wiped the water out of his eyes and then permitted himself to be led away by the property man, the water slopping over his shoe tops at every step.

"Time I git through with him," said Corkey to Johnny, "he'll be wantin' to kick hisself fur being sich a fool."

"He's got the soot an' coal dust washed out'er his eyes fur wunce, anyhow," added Johnny.

Nothing more was seen of Puffy-face until night.

Then he came in, and as Corkey quietly remarked, "he didn't look well behind the gills."

Nor did Puffy-face feel well.

The sousing he got had given him a cold.

He was so hoarse he could scarcely speak above his breath.

"Nice, nice, that for a young lover, isn't it?" said the prompter.

"I'll try and get through with the part," replied Puffy, "but if ever I sit on a board again without looking on both sides of it I'm a sinner."

Corkey heard this little remark.

Corkey had a way of always being near by, when anything was said.

"You'll set on a board of another kind, old feller," said Corkey to himself, as he walked away, "an' it won't be a board er water works either."

There was a crowded audience that night. The orchestra struck up and went through its old beaten track of overture, and then the curtain went up.

Jawkins was in his glory.

The play was "The Corsican Brothers."

Jawkins was the *Louis de Franchi* and the other brother as well.

The man who was selected to do the "double," or the representative brother when Jawkins was on the stage, was Puffy-face.

He was the nearest approach in size to Jawkins in the theater, and his make-up under the directions of the eminent "star" was as perfect as could be expected, ruffled shirt and all.

Everything went well, and Jawkins was happy, until the scene where his brother (in the play) appears to him as he is sitting at the table sealing a letter intended for that brother.

At that moment he gets up, goes off at the entrance for a moment, and his "double" comes on and takes his place at the table, while Jawkins rushes armed down under the stage to come up on the trap as the spirit of *Louis de Franchi*—the brother in Paris.

Just before this Corkey was standing beside Puffy-face in the entrance.

Corkey had posted Johnny what to do.

Johnny did it.

Johnny rushed down behind the wings and popping in on Puffy, said:

"I say, mister, there is a lady out there at the stage-door says she must see you."

"Can't come. Got to go on in two minutes—tell her to wait."

"She says she won't. Says if you don't come up she'll make a big row."

"Who is she?" asked the excited Puffy.

"Dunno. She's got suthin in her hand."

"Blast it, who can it be." Puffy rushed away up the stage toward the stage door.

Meantime one of the characters, *Montgiron*, was standing in the entrance beside Corkey.

Montgiron was deeply absorbed in thinking over his part, which he had never played before. He was thinking of nothing, seeing nothing, hearing nothing but that.

So wrapt up was he in this that he did not even notice Corkey standing beside him or what scene was on the stage.

Corkey at the moment Jawkins was sealing the letter pulled Mr. *Montgiron* by the sleeve, and said, "That's you, go on."

Montgiron, half dazed, shoved his written part into his coat pocket, and never thinking to look, rushed on the stage.

"Git off, you demnition ass," growled Jawkins.

Montgiron never stirred, but looked dumbly on.

"Git off! Great Caesar, what a lunkhead!"

The audience saw the mistake of *Montgiron*, for they knew the play as well as the actors. They had seen it before a score of times.

The boys in the gallery yelled and hissed at the unlucky *Montgiron*.

"Go bag your head!"

"Take a bath!"

"Wipe off yer chin!"

"Hoorah—set 'em up again."

"Bring on the ghost."

And then about two quarts of peanuts came rattling upon the stage at the feet of the misguided *Montgiron*, who was so frightened at the mistake he had made that he hadn't stirred from the spot.

Jawkins, as *Fabien de Franchi*, frantic over this sudden spoiling of his scene, got up from his seat where he was sealing the letter and gave *Montgiron* a push that sent him whirling off at the entrance, just in time for him to come violently in contact with Puffy-face, who had at that instant got back from finding that no woman had been waiting for him, and that he had been nicely sold.

Puffy-face and *Montgiron* thus coming in collision, with a grunt and squeeze went up against the canvas of the wing, and both springing up began unconsciously swearing at each other until the air was blue.

Jawkins threatened to kick the entire company into the middle of the next week, but he didn't.

In the excitement of the moment the prompter rang down the curtain.

This set the boys in front into a wilder hubbub than ever.

At length Jawkins was obliged to go in front of the curtain and speak to the audience.

It took five minutes of posturing, bowing and smiling in dumb show to get the crowd quieted down so they could hear a word he said.

Then he explained matters.

Explained things so that ten seconds after he got off nobody in front or himself could tell or remember what he said.

However, it had the desired effect.

The performance then went on, and the "Corsican Brothers" was finished in peace.

That night Corkey said to Jawkins, as he was packing the latter's wardrobe, "I say, boss, that air row was got up by that air Puffy-face—the feller wot fell into the water-butt this mornin'. He's a snide."

"Him, eh?"

"Sure, boss."

"I'll fix him for it to-morrow."

Corkey grinned.

And that suggested a high old racket for the next night.

CHAPTER XV.

"It's a diabolical disgrace to the stage, that's what it is," growled that eminent tragedian, Mr. Jawkins, to Corkey as they left the stage door. "I'd throw up my engagement if it wasn't too late."

"Wot a snide theayter it must be," said Corkey.

They were getting ready to leave Pittsburg for Cincinnati, and it was the National Theater of the latter city of which the tragedian was speaking.

He had just been told that it was a variety theater.

"Nigger" dancers, clog business, the Gus Williams sort of Dutch dialect sketches and acrobat business preceded and followed the regular dramatic performances.

"Snide! that's it," said Corkey.

But Jawkins had made his contract, and had to fill it.

"Look at that bill," he said, as he unfolded a small programme sheet which had been sent him by mail from Cincinnati. "Look at it, you who have tears, and prepare to shed them now."

There wasn't much drama in that performance, but the variety business loomed out large.

Among other things in the programme was:

THE GREAT UNAPPROACHABLE

MODERN SAMPSON!!

The Man with the Iron Jaws!

Lat's a barrel of beer in his teeth! and drinks the beer from the bung-hole at the same time!

Then in small letters, at the very bottom of the bill was the announcement:

"The celebrated tragedian, Mr. Jawkins, is engaged and will shortly appear."

This was followed by another reference to the "man with the iron jaw."

"He will bear up under a large cannon, placed upon his breast while it is being discharged!"

Jawkins glanced at the bill.

Corkey grinned.

He saw fun ahead.

"The idea of a bull-tosser and a beer-barrel hister being starred in bigger letters than me! Shade of Shakespeare! and that man calls himself a manager!"

They started, however, for Cincinnati on the swift and commodious steamer, *Morning Star*.

It was low water in the Ohio River. The boat got aground five or six times; the pilot got drunk one night up in the wheel-house, and in order to have a little fun run the craft into a flat boat, and wound up his performance by getting his steamer bow out of water high and dry on a sand bar.

Another pilot took hold who was sober. He got the boat into the channel and onto a snag which came very near sinking the whole concern.

Through all these accidents there was a poker party in the main saloon who never ceased playing. A relay of waiters were kept busy from the bar to the table, bringing glasses and bottles, and cigars and fresh packs of cards, and taking back the empty bottles, glasses and soiled cards.

If that steamboat—

Well, we will not finish the sentence, for it can be better ended by the man who got hold of Corkey and Jawkins.

"Shoh! you're one of them actor men, air you?" he said to Jawkins, as they sat on the hurricane deck; "an' I s'pose this here boy air one of yer tumblers, eh?"

"Tumblers—what d'ye mean?"

"Why, don't you histe him up onto your shoulder and sling him about while yer ridin' round the ring onto two cream-colored horses? Oh, I've seen you act in nigh every suckus that came through our town, and we generally have three, includin' a wild animile show and wax-works, every summer."

"Sir," said Jawkins, loftily, "I am not a circus actor,

and that boy is not an infant phenomenon. He is my dresser, sir. I am a tragedian."

"A traggee—a wot?"

"A tragedian!"

"Oh—ah—yaas, I know now—yaas, I see. One of them fellers that comes out onto the thayeter an' howls an' makes believe he's in trouble, an' sticks knives into Injuns, an' kills whole tribes of 'em with one shot, strings onto one bullet—kinder like beans—eh? Yaas. And this boy's your dresser, is he? Can't you dress yourself?"

Jawkins was disgusted.

"I say," he began, for the sake of changing the subject, "I say—your Western steamboat card players are steady players—never stop from the time the boat starts until she gets to the end of the trip."

"Yaas—they're steady. They don't let trifles break up ther game. Poker is a fascinatin' game—very. Wy Mr. Actor man—"

"Jawkins is my name, sir."

"Well, Jawkins—I recollect one time a-go'in' down this same river—it was just above the mouth, at Kiro."

"Cairo?"

"Sum calls it Kayro, an' sum Kiro—'tain't no difference wot you call it. It's half under water half the year, and the balance of the time it looks like a washed out mudhole. Well, we was nigh in sight of Kiro. Down into the kebin there was a party of four who hed bin enjoyin' a little game, the whole trip. They was awfully interested in that game, an' none of 'em seemed to be winnin' er losin' much, but they used up the keards terribly. Wy, the cappen of the boat had to round up to six different towns to git in fresh lots of keards—starbacks they wanted, an' wouldn't play with any other. Well, they'd bin playin' four days an' five nights 'thout gittin' up or movin' from ther cheers, when suddintly, the boat struck a snag and stove the whole bow in."

"That air stove cooked its goose," put in Corkey, who was listening.

"Shut up, Corkey," said Jawkins.

"Yes, sir."

"The boat began to sink at the rate of a million gallons a minute."

"Kinder takin' water on itself," said Corkey, in a whisper.

"And she sunk fast. There was the women screeching an' jumpin' overboard, and the men passengers, puffectly wild a rushin' agin each other grabbin' at everything chairs an' tables, an' goin' head first overboard with 'em for live preservers. But them four poker players never got up from their little game. They just ordered, went their blinds, and seed and called, and made ther rakes, as if nothin' was up."

"Git up, the boat's a sinkin'!" bawled the cap'n.

"Nary a git up fer them. They jist went right on with the game. And, stranger, that boat went down—sunk into twenty-five feet of water—kerslop, an' as I run past them players, the water was up to the kebin deck, an' I heerd one of 'em say: 'I see yer blind, an' go yer a hundred better.' The boat went, and they went with it."

"Well," said Jawkins, "they never finished that game?"

"Didn't they? Well, I reckon, stranger, they did. I floated ashore—swam it, maybe—but when I clim' up onto the bank, I could see the dead floatin' 'bout on the water an' the livin' a strugglin'. There was a empty barrel floated out from the shadder of the sunk steamer into the channel, an' you may bl'ieve me er not, but it's a solemn truth, there was them four steady players floatin' out, each one of 'em holdin' onto the chime of the barrel with one hand an' a holdin' up his hand o' keards in the other hand, an' a striken' out with his feet for shore. The minit they tetchted the bank they yanked that ere barrel up en end, an' standin' by it, went on with their bettin' as if nothin' had happened."

Jawkins looked at the man.

His face was as straight as a rule.

Corkey stuck his tongue into his cheek.

"Was the cards much wet?" asked Corkey, with a grin on his face.

"Boy, them cards was soppin' wet."

"How could they tell what was onto them?"

"They was honorable players, an' each man know'd wot his keards was, an' tuk' each other's word for his hand."

"Well," said Corkey, "I know'd something stranger than that, if, here he gave Jawkins a hearty wink that made the tragedian laugh inwardly so heartily, that in the effort to keep a straight face he came very near chokin'."

"If," continued Corkey, "Mister Jawkins will let me tell it."

"You ain't old enough to know nothin'," said the stranger.

"Ain't I? Pr'aps I ain't."

"You go ahead, Corkey," said Jawkins. "Cut it short, an' don't get off any of your Old Bowery chestnuts."

"'Tain't no chestnuts—an' it ain't no kid I'm givin' you."

"Fire away, Corkey."

Corkey upturned one of the boat's leather buckets, which are always kept on the hurricane deck of a Western steamer, and placing it in front of Jawkins and the stranger, began:

"You see, boss," he said, giving Jawkins another awful wink, "I was goin' up this air same river —"

"This river," said Jawkins, who knew that Corkey had never been within a hundred miles of it before, in all his born days.

"In course, this river," another wink; "well, there was four fellers onto the boat, a playin' ole sledge—seven up—you know. They had been settin', 'thout gittin' up, fer two days and nights, a playin' steady, and takin' in their grub and nips. On the mornin' of the third day, the demed old scow blowed up—the biler busted. Wen it busted, them fellers was jist beginnin' a new game, and one feller had only one to get for game. They was settin' round a table."

"Well?"

"Yaas—'xactly."

"Wen the biler bust, it blowed me up inter the air, and I lit on shore, right alongside a clump of trees, and wasn't hurted a bit—only a little kinder shook up."

"An' them old sledge players?" said the stranger "I s'pose that ended thar game."

"Not much. Wot d'ye take me fur?" said Corkey.

"Well, you see I jist sorter rolled my eye up. Lord, wot a pile of people, pieces of biler and chunks of boat there was a comin' down! And them keerd players was a comin' down too. You better b'lieve they was. All four of them was a holdin' onto the table, and them and the table came down, jist as they had riz up, an' them with ther chairs under 'em and the table between them lit on the top of a big tree close to the shore."

"Well," said Jawkins.

"Shoh!" said the stranger.

"They didn't show me well. Right up there in the top of that air tree they went on with the game, an' I heerd the feller who had only one to go, yell out, 'there, I've turned jack and that puts me out,' and you see he kinder forgittin' hisself, lost his balance an' dropped outer his chair and down he came sog! on to the ground."

"And killed him, I s'pose, Corkey," said Jawkins, laughing.

"No, fur he climbed up that tree agin, and raked in the pot 'fore the other fellers missed him."

The stranger looked at Corkey, rose up and said:

"One of these days I may want to start a lyin' school, and ef I do I'll send for that air boy of yours, mister, an' make him the head teacher."

The stranger walked off.

Jawkins laughed.

"Corkey, you rather got the best of him."

"He's a snoozer," answered Corkey. "He can't tell no stories worth a cent, he can't. Why, Johnny kin beat him all holler, an' he's a slouch longside of some o' the Bowery fellers."

They arrived in good time at Cincinnati, and Corkey, at the direction of Jawkins, found lodgings, "a bunkin' dive" as he called it, in Sycamore Street not far from the old National Theater where Jawkins was to play.

Next day the rehearsal of Jawkins' opening play was had.

"Wot an old dodger this shop is," said Corkey when he took his first look over the stage, "wonder it don't drop into itself with dry rot."

Corkey also got a sight of the "man with the iron jaw."

"That's the feller, is it?" said Corkey. "Well, ef I don't git a racket onto him afore two nights git by, I'm a snoozer. He ain't no good."

Corkey saw him rehearse and practice his feats of strength, and after he was through heard him tell the property man to be "careful and put very little powder in the cannon. Not more than a good-sized load for an ordinary gun."

Corkey eyed the cannon.

It was a brightly rubbed up brass piece, a field howitzer.

"I'm thinkin' I'll help load that air gun to-night, and ef I do that an iron jaw'll be sorter gumswiggled when it goes orf."

"S'posin' it hurts," said Johnny.

"Let 'er bust," answered Corkey; "but I guess the old thing won't. I'll risk it."

That afternoon Corkey brought powder enough for a twenty-four pounder.

Then he came back to the theater, upon the stage.

Everybody had gone away, excepting, of course, the stage door-keeper.

Corkey was ready for business.

For him business meant a high old racket of fun.

Quickly and solidly he loaded that gun.

The ordinary load used by the iron-jaw, man for it was not larger than that used in charging a common musket.

But Corkey improved upon it.

The load he put in was enough for three such field pieces.

It would have made a Fourth of July boy sick.

Corkey jammed the wadding into the cannon hard and tight with a stage brace.

Then, after making sure that everything was all right, he and Johnny left the theater and waited for night to come.

Jawkins little dreamed of the new racket by which that wretched "man with the iron jaw" was to be more astonished than ever he was before in the whole course of his life.

Night came, and also Corkey with Jawkins' basket, Johnny with an unusually broad grin on his face, and

Jawkins with a melo-dramatic scowl as he thought of the insult which had been put on him by the manager.

"Billing a cussed sawdust wrestler above me. It's enough to disgust a man with his profession. Even a supe would resent it. I'd like to punch all their heads."

"Never you mind, boss," said Corkey, "maybe ole strong jaw'll get his fill of big letters afore we leave here."

"What d'ye mean, bub?"

"Jest you wait; me an' Johnny's got a little racket onder him that'll make 'im sick of sandwichin' hisself into the legitimate dramer."

The audience was large and noisy, filling the old theater from parquette to gallery.

"A reg'lar variety dive crowd," muttered Jawkins, as he peered through a hole in the curtain. "Nice crowd that for the legitimate drama. It's enough to make old Booth's bones rattle in their coffin."

The curtain went up, and a pair of clog dancers stamped about the stage, making the dust fly up in little clouds from the cracks and seams.

Then a female ballad singer screeched a remote resemblance to "Tommy, make room for your auntie."

The audience yelled with delight, which made Jawkins, standing at the wing, scowl so fiercely and bring his eyebrows so far down over his eyes that it was hard to tell which was his brow or which was his moustache.

"Abominable!" he exclaimed.

After the singist came three or four gymnasts who twisted themselves into all sorts of uncouth and unheard of shapes, made pyramids of themselves, turned cartwheel flip-flaps, and played leap frog, and wound up by making human wheelbarrows of each other.

"And they call that actin'!" growled Jawkins.

"Them's snoozers," said Corkey.

Then came a woman who did the wonderful under water act in a big tank of water.

She dove and splashed about, eat a peeled banana under water, wrote her name on a cracked slate in the same way, and finally, with slow music, went to sleep for four minutes by her agent's watch, but by everybody else's time only a minute and a half.

Then she splashed out, and in breathlessness silence the crowd awaited the next performance—that of the wonderful and unapproachable man with the iron jaw.

Two supes brought on a parcel of big cannon balls, rolled on the barrel of water, and eight of them lugged on the iron cannon.

The big stout fellow tossed the cannon balls into the air, bounced them about like peas on the muscles of his arms, and did everything but swallow them.

He lifted the barrel by the chime with his teeth, but he didn't drink any of the water.

Had it been beer, possibly he might have tried it.

Then came the cannon feat.

"Ladies and shentlemens, I will now throw myself pack mit a hand-spring und eight men shall blace de gannon om my preast, un den I will pull de spring mit de lock, and fire mit de shoot one time de gannon off."

"Ye gods of high Olympus" And they let this man butcher English on the stage where Forrest has walked!" grumbled Jawkins.

The iron jawed man threw himself back so, that resting on his hands and feet, his body formed a sort of arch, breast upwards, with his big head hanging down between his arms and looking out at the audience like a turtle peeping out of his shell.

Eight supes then lifted up the cannon and carefully placed it lengthwise up'n the iron-jawed man's breast.

Then one of the supes gave him the cord which was attached to the lock.

Old Iron Jaws then lifting one of his hands—resting his weight upon his feet, and with the other hand, placed the cord between his teeth.

Corkey and Jawkins stood in the opposite wing, watching the show.

Iron Jaw then suddenly gave his head a downward jerk.

Bang!—and the man with the iron jaw, oh, where was he?

Bang! crash and smash went the glass in the windows of the dressing room.

Bounce, bump, thud, went that old brass cannon, back off Iron Jaw's breast, nearly ten feet, and sprawling the man flat as a pancake.

"I'm kilt, I'm ted, mine Gott in himmel, whas ish dos pust to bieees—I'm ted!" howled Iron Jaw, rolling over and over, down the stage.

The explosion shook the old wall of the theater like an earthquake, and half the lights in front and on the stage were put out by the concussion.

The gallery boys, seeing that nobody was hurt roared and stamped and whistled with delight like a legion of escaped lunatics.

The uproar was terrific.

This frightened the demoralized Iron Jaws all the more.

A dozen of the stage people, actors and carpenters ran out, and grabbing him, contrived to set him upon his feet.

"Fin Touster flukter!" he groaned, and then another roar and shout from the audience.

That settled him; and without knowing what he did, he made a wild bolt off the stage, up past the entrance and out pass the stage door-keeper.

"Go after that feller," cried the stage manager; "he'll jump into the river—he's crazy as a bed-bug, the derned old Dutch fool. Might a know'd better than to load his infernal cannon in that way."

Four or five of the scene shifters started after the iron jaw lunatic.

They caught sight of him in his tights and spangled breeches rushing at a two forty gait down the street, with a crowd of boys yelling after him.

"Stop 'em, stop 'em!"

"Head him off."

"Turn him!"

Just as he made a dive to cross the corner of Fourth and Sycamore, he ran butt up against a policeman who threw his arms around him and so brought him to a standstill panting and blowing like a dying whale.

"Mein Gott in himmel!" exclaimed the Iron Jaw.

"Wat's the matter wid you," said the officer.

Just then one of the boys bawled out: "tried to set fire to the theayter."

That was enough. The policeman glanced down Sycamore Street toward the theater.

The sight seemed to verify the boy's words.

There was an immense crowd in front of the theater. The unusual explosion of that cannon had started the report among the loungers outside that somebody had hid a keg of powder under the stage and fired it off by a slow match.

Then the story flew from one to another.

By the time it had traveled half a dozen blocks rumor had it that the whole inside of the theater was a wreck, and that four hundred people, including all the actors, had been killed at one fell swoop.

"They're draggin' out the bodies now," was the report.

"All a fire inside," was added to it.

The way the policeman yanked that Germanic Iron Jaw to the police station shivering in his tights was a caution.

"You horrible wretch—puttin' kegs of powder under the stage. You're good for a hanging match if you ain't lynched before mornin'."

Meanwhile the uproar in the theater was on the decline.

The audience was gradually quieting down and getting impatient for the performance of the programme.

"I say, boss," whispered Corkey, "wasn't that a high old bust—hey?"

"Did you cram that cannon, Corkey?" asked Jawkins in a sepulchral tone.

"You bet!"

"It might have killed him."

"Shoh! I knowd it wouldn't. Them fellers ain't so easy got away with. Serve him right fur interferin' with the reglar dramer."

Jawkins laughed all over.

As for Johnny he was taking it all in and enjoying it as much as Corkey.

"Ther's nothin' like knowin' how to do things!" said Corkey, "an I'm goin' two to ten that that air iron jawed feller won't do that air cannon trick again this week."

"Wot's come of him?" asked Johnny.

"Skipped—gone to look up his grandmother," answered Corkey grinning.

After half an hour's delay the performance went on—Jawkins' play being the card.

Of course that went ahead all right, and without further disturbance in front.

Outside the crowd that had gathered disgusted with finding out that nothing had happened in anywise horrible began slowly to disperse.

The policeman, after lugging Iron Jaw into the station hurried down to the theater expecting to find mountains of dead bodies.

He only found himself sold.

Then he went back, told his little story, and when Iron Jaw had calmed down and made the discovery that he wasn't hurt he was discharged.

With a borrowed coat and hat, he slipped out of the station and was taken to his lodgings in a hack.

"Hi catch mit dem dam fool wat loads mit my gannon more ash den dimes of bowder ash woot plo up efery dings I'll smash him mit a glub!"

You see he didn't know Corkey.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE man with the iron jaw was so awfully disgusted at the result of his wrestle with the cannon that he threw up his engagement, and cleared out for some other more favorable town where the powder was not likely to be so plentiful.

Corkey gloated over the success of his last trick, more especially as it pleased Jawkins.

"Big thing, Corkey," said Jawkins. "Big thing that. Blew him out, eh? By Jove, I laughed more ever that bust up than I have since I saw an amateur play *Hamlet*, and double it with the ghost in the Old Bowery."

"He's a big duffer—a reglar snide," said Corkey. "I don't believe he's got any more muscle into hisself than a round-shouldered cockroach."

[Corkey had no further chance to get up anything like a racket at the old National.

There was but the one performance of a dramatic kind in any evening, the bill being otherwise filled up with variety business on the stage, and an immense amount of beer drinking and peanut eating in front.

Jawkins was a success in this engagement.

Jawkins in point of fact, generally made himself a success wherever he went—that is, as far as his own particular financial condition was concerned.

"Certainly, that's my little game; never trust a manager, not even of a snake show; they're on the beat, my boy. A man who isn't a beat will be a failure as a manager."

"Wot is the beats fur?" queried Johnny of Corkey.

"Cause," said Corkey, "cause you see nuthin but beats kin manage beats. Them actor fellers is most all of 'em the wust kind of beats. Just you ask the landlords and the s'loon keepers in de Bowery if they ain't. Why, they never pays nothin' to nobody if they kin git out of it. You bet I knows 'em, Johnny. 'Hang it up, Cully,' is wot they say 'hang it up nibsy till the ghost walks,' an' they walk off a darned long while afore the ghost starts."

"Wot's the ghost?" asked Johnny.

"Wot's the matter wid you," said Corkey. "You bein' loafin' 'bout the stage all these years and dunno wot the ghost is? Why I'm stonished at you. The ghost means salary, the treasurer, d'ye see? When yer gits yer pay, that's the ghost."

"Oh, yes, and when yer don't git it, wot's that?"

"That's a ghost of another color. That's the sort of ghost most of these here country actors sees every week."

"I say, Corkey, when's the boss goin' to skip outer this town, d'ye know?"

"Saturday, of course."

"Where's he goin'?"

"Why to Louisville."

"Big place?"

"Dunno. I guess there's room 'nough into it fur us fellers to git up a racket into?"

"Maybe that air iron jawed fellow's there."

"Ef he is, and tries to show up at our theayter he'll git jist the wust racket that he ever had. I'll give him suthin' that'll knock that air cannon bustin' inter a cocked hat."

"Wot is't, eh?"

"That's tellin', Johnny."

That afternoon Jawkins was furious.

He had put up Macbeth for his benefit, and had just had a tremendous row with the manager.

The manager, who had great faith in variety, wanted to put in as witches a pair of clog dancers, a nigger banjo soloist with a song, and a Dutch delineator.

"You see," said the manager, "it'll be a new thing, and I'll draw big money."

"Gods!" exclaimed Jawkins, "Macbeth interview nigger singers and mashers in wooden shoes on the blasted heath in thunder, lightning and rain!"

"Certainly," said the manager, "let 'em get up a storm clog dance."

Jawkins glared at him, much as he would have glared at Banquo's blood-battered ghost, had it staggered in drunk with a glass of beer in one hand and a penny American flag in the other.

"No, sir!" roared Jawkins.

"No?"

"Not an inch of it! I'll throw up my engagement first!"

"Who's running this show?" sneered the manager.

"You are," retorted Jawkins, "for nobody but an imitable ass like you would dare insult the memory of the mighty Shakespeare by shovin' a cussed lot of burnt-cork fakirs into his face!"

"I'll make John Hart play Hecate," cried the manager.

"Ugh!" groaned Jawkins.

"I'll do as I please in my own theater."

"Circus, you mean!"

"I'll send for Gus Williams to star it in Macduff, if I like."

"Bah!"

"I'll—why, dam'me, I'll put George Knight in for King Duncan, and make a Dutchman of the part. I won't be dictated to!"

"You're a —" Jawkins choked with his wrath.

Casting a withering glance at the manager, and drawing himself up to his full height, he walked off with a melodramatic stride.

"I'll hear no more," he said. "Lie, prophet, in thy speech; for this, among the rest, were you ordained. I'll—I'll play no more!"

That settled it.

"I'll sue you for damages," bawled the manager.

"You need sue for damages—I'll punch your head for you, you incomprehensible idiot!"

So they parted.

The manager didn't sue.

But late in the day he got out a small announcement sheet and had it posted all over town.

Owing to the sudden and severe illness of Mr. Jawkins, it read, "it will be impossible for him to appear. In place of Macbeth will be substituted Signor Jipjump-upitkowski, the world famous artist on the flying tra-

peze. He will personate the 'The Aerial Scout of the Clouds.'

Didn't Jawkins rave over this poster when he saw it.

"Come, Corkey, let's get out of this pork town; pack up and we'll skip for Louisville."

Corkey went to work with a will.

So did Johnny.

Meanwhile, until the time for starting, Jawkins amused himself by getting into himself as big a cargo of beer and other exhilarating fluids as he could conveniently carry without sinking.

"We'll hic, em-bark on the hic, the Ben hic, Stra-ben-Strader, hic," said Jawkins, late in the evening.

"Isn't he loaded?" said Johnny.

"Been a drinkin' pork-house rum," said Corkey.

At last they got aboard the *Ben Strader*, and leaving Corkey and Johnny to themselves, Jawkins retired to his stateroom, and tumbling into his berth, boots and all, in five minutes was fast asleep.

The steamboat puffed, and ploughed, and trembled, and coughed and smoked after the fashion of all western river steamers down the muddy stream in safety to its wharf at Louisville.

Jawkins, refreshed by his sleep, betook himself to the Gulf House.

That was the high-toned hotel of the city, and Jawkins never felt so high-toned as he did when just getting over a heavy drunk.

Corkey and Johnny directed by him found a lodging place in a less costly house.

Jawkins was well known in Louisville.

He had been there before. But Corkey hadn't you see.

"Derned if this town isn't 'bout two-thirds niggers," said Johnny.

"Well, wot of it?" said Corkey. "Niggers is useful s'long's they don't git in the way an' keep into the shade in the summer."

"Mr. Jawkins was posted all over this city to appear in 'Nick of the Woods, in his immense creation' as played by him something less than half a million times before all the elite and upper crust high cockalorums of the leading cities of the country—the *Jibbenainosay*.

According to these four sheet posters Joe Proctor was nowhere in comparison with Jawkins.

Rehearsal time came.

Corkey was on hand looking out for the supes.

He had now become so thoroughly posted and acquainted with all Jawkins' pieces that the latter individual had but little occasion to give him any orders as to the drilling of the supes.

There were only ten regular supes.

These were to do the Indians.

Corkey got them together at the upper part of the stage.

"Wot a lot of greasers," said Johnny.

"They don't look very professional, but for Injins they'll do I guess," answered Corkey.

"You feller's got to do this here bizness jest as I tell you," said Corkey, "an if you don't there'll be a black eye somewhere in the crowd with a swellin' behind it."

Night came.

The supes were all assembled.

There was no Spanish brown, the color with which to give their faces the necessary hue of the noblered on the warpath.

Two or three of them without mentioning this circumstance asked Corkey: "What'll we use for our faces?"

"Oh, anything; sky blue'll do with a streak of white on yer noses," put in Johnny, as Corkey walked away.

The boys took it literally.

"These here New York stars an' these fellers don't know as much 'bout Injins as a prairie baby," said one of the supes.

"Obey orders, ef yer bust owners," said another.

And they did. They raked together a parcel of ultramarine (sky blue) and plastered their faces with it.

Then each supe gave his nose a ghastly dab of white. Their appearance would have made Sitting Bull sick.

The Indian wardrobe was also slightly out of sorts.

Two of the Indians got himself up in top boots and sheets.

One of them, finding no other available head-gear, ornamented his head with a Roman helmet, and put on a short tunic, with a pair of corduroy knee breeches and congress gaiters, the latter being his street shoes, down at the heels, and not at all perfect at the toes.

Another supe, in order to deceive the audience into the belief that he was an entire and perfect Indian warrior, stuffed his pants into a saggy-legged pair of double-soled boots, painted his hands blue, threw over his shoulders a purple velvet ducal mantle, and strapped it close about his waist with an army cavalry belt.

They were a gorgeous-looking lot of Indians.

Three or four of them had spears, one of them presented himself with a shield, on which was S. P. Q. R. in gilt letters. Two of them had bayonets, one a combat sword, and a little fellow with bow legs and enormous feet stood manfully erect, with an immense, broad battle ax on his shoulder.

"You air a nice-lookin' lot of Injuns, ain't you?" said Corkey, as he looked at them, standing in a group in one of the entrances. "Derned if you wouldn't give a sober man the jimjams. Wot d'ye mean, say?"

They didn't say.

It was too late for them to make any change.

"It's the way we alters make up fur Injuns here," said the little bow-legged fellow, leaning on his battle-ax.

"Is it? Well, ef I wanted to skeer all the Injuns off'n the plains plum inter the Pacific pond, you'd be the crowd I'd git to do it."

Luckily Jawkins didn't see them.

If he had, he would have thrown up the dramatic sponge and skipped on sight, or taken a dozen extra drinks.

Corkey, never forgetting that his mission on earth was to have all the fun he could get in a given time, said nothing, except to Johnny. "If we don't have a racket out of these fellers, I'm a snoozer."

The curtain went up and the play began.

It was then suddenly discovered that the actor who was to do the Indian chief, *Wenonga*, was, to use Corkey's expression, "drunker than thirteen wild goats."

He had been out to the races.

And had bet on the wrong horse, and as the wrong horse didn't win, he had taken pains to drown his grief and disappointment in several gallons more or less of beer and other lively fluids.

So it was that when at night he got to the theater he didn't know, to any great extent, whether he was to do *Wenonga* or *Julius Caesar* or any other part.

He was fearfully and frightfully careened over, so to speak.

He leaned against the edge of a wing just after the curtain went up, at the suggestion of Corkey.

Of course the wing slid out on the stage and *Wenonga* sat down—squelch!

The wing flying out suddenly struck Nick of the Woods in the back and gave him a pitch forward, and caused that gay old trapper to throw his arms up just in time for one of his fingers to make an involuntary poke into the eye of one of the ladies on the stage.

Jawkins hearing the yell of the audience in front rushed down to the prompter's place.

Corkey using all his strength, assisted by Johnny lifted the demoralized *Wenonga* up to a perpendicular, and hitting him two or three whacks on the back to bring him to, whispered in his ear: "Brace up—stage is waiting for you—got your cue five minutes ago."

"Hey—what—hic—what scene ish it?"

"Your scene—rush on," said Corkey, giving him a push.

As a matter of course it wasn't his scene.

He had no business on the stage at that time.

Corkey knew it.

But he wanted a racket, a little one, as a sort of eye opener for the one he had in his mind, to follow it.

Wenonga paused a moment to gather his scattered senses, and then poising himself, made a bolt, a rush, and in a second more he had struck a sort of miscellaneous attitude in the center of the stage in front of the roaring audience.

Jawkins at the prompt-place, half shrieked:

"What's that beast doing on there? Go off—get off, idiot!"

Wenonga flourished his tomahawk.

"Whersh white man—hic. Big injin—eat mush corn—hic—dodger. Meta—hic—mora—mora—can—hic can't—hic. You've shout for me—hic—an' I've come 'f you hic—d-d-on't want me—hic—I'll—"

"Go off," bawled Jawkins, "go off, or I'll punch you."

"Hi! hi!" howled the gallery boys.

"He's a walkin' distillery!" said the prompter

But the *Wenonga* wouldn't go off.

He couldn't.

He had struck a bracing attitude with his legs apart, and any attempt at a movement, he had just sense enough left to know would result in his immediately dropping upon the stage.

"Git a wheelbarrow!" cried one of the audience.

"Git a shovel!"

"Young-man-afraid-to-move!"

"Hurrah! Tap 'im!"

And then began a series of hissing as if a million of geese had been let loose.

Half that amount of hissing would have hissed Rome out of existence.

This was followed by a tremendous outburst of cat-calls, whistles and cries of "Put him under a pump!" "Hoop 'im in—" "Oh, wot a Injin."

"Them races must be a sorter general run to see wich kin git drunk the fust," said Johnny, next morning to Corkey.

"That air *Wenonger*—wasn't he fuller'n fifty biled owls?"

"The boss said he was goin' to guv him a warmin'."

"But he won't!"

"Why?"

"Cos he wuz drunk hisself into the last act."

"Wot a gay old 'Macbeth' they'll have of it to-night, won't they?" said Johnny.

"I'm a bettin' they won't want another hitch at it," said Corkey.

"Yer got a racket up onto it, eh?"

"Not yit—but them rackets allus turn up when a feller wants 'em. They hain't never missed yit, Johnny."

Nor had they with Corkey.

Rackets came to him sometimes faster than he wanted them.

And so far in all his fun and tricks and contrivances

against the peace and comfort of the supes and the bad actors he had never get into trouble himself.

As for Johnny, he allowed nothing to upset his good nature.

That night Jawkins was to appear in his "far-famed artistic personation of Shakespeare's sublime masterpiece, *Macbeth*, as personated by him over three hundred nights in New York and other cities."

That's the way the bills had it.

There was a flaming big colored wood-cut of Jawkins as *Macbeth* posted about the city.

Johnny said it looked more like a "pictur" of the cappen of a Bowery target company in some other feller's sojer clothes."

That cut was so vaguely drawn, and so peculiarly colored, that in different towns Jawkins had used it for half a dozen different characters.

In one place it was used as "Jawkins in his great part of *Rolla*."

In another as "Richard III."

And as the "Carpenter of Rome;" and once Jawkins labeled it "Jawkins in his thrilling delineation of *Shylock*."

This time, however, it was "Macbeth with all the original music, and one hundred witches on the stage."

Reduced to actual count the witches only numbered five.

Which shows you, boys, that there is in the theatrical business a great deal of difference between performance and promise.

Macbeth, then it was.

That day almost the entire company (excepting of course the ladies) had been again to the races, and most of them, from the leading man who was to do *Macduff*, down to the utility man who said he had to "fake" the Bleeding Sergeant, "an' didn't—hic—know er line of it."

"Wing it, my boy—hic—same's 'sidid—hic—Richmond once."

Jawkins saw them coming in one after another to their dressing-rooms, and his mad was up to boiling heat.

Corkey saw them also, and the sight delighted him.

"If some of them fellers ain't my meat 'fore *Macbeth's* killed, it won't be my fault."

While the play was being rehearsed in the forenoon, and all of the crowd were on tenter hooks to get away to the races, Corkey, was in "gunning" around for a chance to cook up a little racket. In the property-room he found, among other suggestive things, a "chunk" of shoemaker's wax.

"Wonder what they use this wax for?" said Corkey to himself, as he took it up. "It's kinder soft layin round into this hot place. Sticky as thunder." Then the thought of a use he might put it to struck him.

"By jingo," he exclaimed, "I've struck the dodge; ef I hain't, I'm a nigger."

He dropped that lump of wax into his capacious coat pocket, and whistled softly as he did so:

"There's a yally old row-row-row."

It wasn't operatic, but it meant something, and so did the merry way in which he winked to himself,

"Say, you young feller, wot are you doin' in here?" said the property man.

"Lookin' at things?" answered Corkey.

"Well, there's no admittance here, so you kin just git outside and look at things the other side of the door."

"Kin I?"

"Yes, and you'd better skip out."

"All right, old duffer—but I say, wot's that big high backed boned bottom cheer for, that stan's out there by that entrance?"

"Well, my young kid, that's the chair for the Banker to set down in at the banquet after he's s'posed to git his throat slit. Dy'er know now?"

"Spect I do. Ef I don't it won't gimme the hoopin cough, old feller," said Corkey, as he leisurely lounged out of the property room.

"Wonder what darned fool that is. One of the new supes, maybe," said the property man, glancing after Corkey.

"Ef that feller'd knowd wot I was a lookin' for wen I asked wot cheer that was, my little racket wouldn't be worth much—not for a cent."

Corkey examined the chair.

The seat was wide and deep, the back high and straight, and painted to resemble carved work.

It was what is known on the stage as a "throne chair."

"That'll do," said Corkey to himself, rubbing his hand over the seat.

He and Johnny waited round until rehearsal was over.

Then everybody left, for everybody was in a hurry to get away to the race course.

In half an hour the stage was as lonely and deserted as if it had never been occupied.

"Now then, Johnny," said Corkey, "you jest loaf round up there on the stage, and keep yer eyes skinned ef anybody's comin', and if they do gimme a cough so'st I'll know."

"Ke-rect," said Johnny. "Ef anybody is in sight I'll have a werry violent cough, you bet."

Corkey then quietly went into the property room, secured a bit of candle, came out, lighted it, and holding the chunk of wax over it and above the middle of

the seat of the big chair, speedily melted the wax over it.

In a very few minutes he had the whole lump melted and spread upon the seat.

Then he slipped across the stage into the paint room, dipped one of the brushes into a pot of red paint, very nearly like the color of the seat of the chair, and coming back painted over the whole seat, thus concealing all trace of the wax.

Long before night the paint was dry, and it would have taken a sharp eye to notice any difference in its appearance.

The banquet scene is in the third act.

All the courtiers and attendants of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* were ranged at the tables which were covered with pasteboard goblets gilded with Dutch metal.

At the right and near the end of one of the tables was placed the chair in which *Banquo* was to sit when he came on with his finger pointed at his gory locks, in full view of the audience.

Jawkins in his royal robes as *Macbeth* was doing the honors of the feast, while *Lady Macbeth*, played by a pudgy, fat-faced woman, with a voice that sounded like the falsetto rip of a cross-cut saw, was seated on her throne.

Corkey was on the stage dressed as one of the royal attendants, and grinning all over his face.

"Sweet remembrances," was *Mac's* speech, "now good digestion waits on appetite and health on both. Here have we now 'our country's honor roofed were the grac'd person of our *Banquo* present."

Then *Banquo* enters at the first entrance, his thumb all bloody, his face chalked white and with his finger pointing at it.

Corkey's eyes snapped and winked.

On stalked *Banquo*, full of race-track bourbon, looking as ghastly and solemn as an owl.

On he came and sat down in that chair.

Then came *Lennox's* little speech asking *Mac* to sit down.

"Where," says *Mac* *Jawkins*, who is of course supposed not to know there is an empty seat among the guests.

"Here, my lord," answers *Lennox*, who points to the *Banquo* seat.

Then *Jawkins* roars in tragic tones as he gets sight of *Banquo*, "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me."

Then *Mrs. Mac* comes down and tries to take him out of his fright.

Still *Banquo* sits there and *Mac* *Jawkins* gets wild, and at last when *Banquo* nods two or three times at him but won't get up, comes the exit speech from *Mac*, upon which *Banquo* is to make his exit.

"If charnel houses and our graves must send those we bury back, our monuments shall be the maws of kites."

Then *Banquo* sought to rise up and get off, but he didn't.

He tried too, but he had warmed that was, sitting on it, and stuck.

He tried to rise up, but found himself fast, and a terrible strain on his tights.

"Git up, you drunken jjit," said *Jawkins*, in a hoarse side speech.

Again *Banquo* tried and couldn't, and he begun to get mad.

"Cussed, if he ain't too drunk to lift himself up," said one of the "lords."

Another desperate attempt of the astonished and stuck *Banquo* to rise.

This time he did rise, and lifted the front legs of the chair up from the floor, and then came a ripping sound as of cloth tearing.

"Oh!" exclaimed *Banquo*, forgetting everything but his own misery, as he clapped his hands behind him, and made a wild rush off at the first entrance.

Over backwards went that high-backed chair with a crash, the top of it striking the shins of a thin-legged supe in tights, as it went down.

"Great Caesar," cried *Jawkins*. "What next!"

Fvery body on the stage roared. The audience howled, and the boys in the gallery fairly shrieked.

Banquo when he rushed off ran into *Lady Macbeth's* physician who uttered a yell and doubled up as if suddenly gripped by the colic.

"That ain't the first ghost that couldn't git up an' git," grinned Corkey.

There wasn't much more of *Macbeth* heard that night, for the boys up stairs at every scene now and then bawled out, "Banko, Banko!" and set *Jawkins* in such a fever that he forgot his part, and raved through his part like a man with his head off.

Corkey was equally as wild with delight, and laughed and grinned till the curtain went down.

That night as he was leaving the stage *Jawkins* received a telegram from New York. "Come on at once, terms accepted."

"Now, Corkey, this week closes our travel, and we go back to New York. I shall open at the Bowery for a six weeks engagement in the new spectacle 'The Fiery Fiend of France' specially engaged on my own terms."

"All right," said Corkey. "It fits me boss, like a injy rubber stockin'."

But Corkey had another racket yet in his eye.

CHAPTER XVII.

"We're sort er cut short, Johnny," said Corkey. "Boss goes back to de Bowery again, and our chance of samplin' any mam of these here country shops is mighty slim."

"Spose you starts out as a star, Corkey," suggested Johnny.

"A wot?"

"Why, a star. A feller hain't got to be no Me-thusler fer to be able to show act, hez he? 'Sides those other kinds of actin' except Jawkins sort."

"Don't git off your nest, Johnny. It ain't no easy thing to git up and take in actin' in job lots as a star. Wat could I star it in?"

"Why, you're not 'bliged to act out parts. Wasn't that air iron-jawed feller a star, an' he didn't know no more 'bout actin' than a sick monkey."

"Wat, d'ye want me to sling cannon balls and rastle wid frin' 'em off? Hain't 'nuff muscle inter the Corkey family for that."

"Put yerself up as a acrobat."

"Acrobat? Now look here, Johnny, I ain't a takin' in ta'gy; 'tain't my week fer it."

"Wen we gits back inter the Bowery I spose we'll have to go onto our own hook agin?"

"Dunno—but it kinder looks to me as if Jawkins intended keepin me right along, an' if he does that, wy, Johnny, you'll be all right."

"An' if you get the bounce then we'll—"

"Bounce inter some other lay—git into soopin' it agin, er maybe some other high priced star'll want a fust class dresser."

"And jest as likely as that he won't," said Johnny.

"Well, les go over to the theayter an' see wot's goin' on."

"That is ef we kin get there 'thout fallin' over a crowd of niggers. Fur every white man in this here town I'm blessed if there ain't more'n fifty niggers."

So talking together they went to the theater.

"Hello," said Corkey, "wot's up—they're all sober."

"But they look awful sick. That air Banko feller looks as if he'd bin a swallerin a quart of water at a alp."

"Ketch him a committin' suicide in that way?—not much. I guess they've all bet onto the wrong hoss, 'er gone dead broke—ain't got nuff left to git their 'ornin' eye-openers."

"They're rehearsin' 'Pizarro, or Death on Rollers,'" said Johnny; "that's a gay old piece—it is."

"Death of Rollar, you mean," said Corkey. "Jawkins thinks he's big in Rollar."

"In size he is, but in voice—oh my eye—he ain't no where 'long side of wot old Bill Whalley used to be. Wy, wen Bill over there at the Bowery used to let out a howl at the willain of the piece, folks in front wot didn't know him, used ter think a clap of ragged thunder had slapped 'em onto the ears, and de fellers goin' up and down de Bowery outside, allus said: 'That's either Bill on de stage, 'er it's a cannon busted.'"

The rehearsal was nearly over, and Corkey loafed about the wings looking on in hope something might turn up that would give him a chance for some sort of a jawwell racket.

He hadn't forgotten the high old racket he had with the same play in the Bowery when the super set himself on fire with the bottle-neck fire from the "flies."

Another jamboree like that would have made him happier than a king.

"Corkey," said Jawkins, coming up to him at one of the wings, "I want you to look sharp after the supers to-night. We've got a new prompter, and I don't think he's up to his business."

"Where's the other one?" asked Corkey.

"Hain't got back from the races."

"Put 'imself up on the losin' hoss and lost, eh?" said Johnny with a grin.

"Kerect, boss," answered Corkey; "I'll make 'em move lively."

Corkey slouched over to the prompter's place. Over the prompter's desk or "box" he noticed the various bell wires, running to the flies, to the orchestra and under the stage.

"I wonder if that air new prompter knows wich is wich?"

The thought had hardly come into his mind when the new prompter came up.

"I say, mister," said Corkey, "glad you're the prompter."

"Are you, bub?" The new prompter seemed pleased with the compliment. He was a soft, easy-going looking young man, with a bewildered, doubtful sort of look.

"Well, bub," he added, after a short pause, "we'll try and get through all right for the sake of the star."

"Maybe," said Corkey to himself, and then to the prompter he said, "Know wich is wich of them bells?"

"Of course I do," said the prompter, but in such a tone that sharp Corkey knew at once he didn't know anything about them.

"I had fun with the stage bells onct," he thought, "and I'm thinkin' here's a chance fur it agin."

Corkey and Johnny went off together; Corkey an hour afterward came back alone.

There was no one on the stage. In his hand Corkey had five or six little strips of paper.

On each of these strips was plainly written in large letters the name of a bell.

"Trap bell," "Curtain," "Orchestra," "Foot-lights," etc.

Now Corkey knew no more about the bell pull or to what bell any of them belonged—but he quickly and expertly wet the back of each slip which he had previously gummed with mucilage and pasted one under each bell-knob or pull.

"Now then we'll see if that feller knows the bells or not."

Night came and so did the audience and the play.

Jawkins was in high spirits and the company was almost to a man as sober as a deacon.

"Ring in the first music," said the stage manager to the carpenter. "It's ten minutes of eight."

The stage was at this time full of the confusion of setting it.

Carpenters pounding at set pieces, scene shifters in their shirt sleeves rushing flats and wings back and forth and the supes, Peruvians and soldiers wandering and dodging over it to keep out of the way.

Ataliba, Pizarro and Cora were standing in the midst of the stage talking about their parts.

Jawkins was gossiping with Elvira.

All ready for business.

The prompter when he received the order, "Ring in the music," reached up and looked up.

He saw the name under one of the bell pulls, and gave it a jerk and immediately heard a bell tinkle—somewhere.

Presently—in two minutes—there was a commotion, for from above down came a great huge hanging palace flat and the borders.

"What 'n—are you doing up there? Histe up that flat!" roared two or three of the stage hands.

"Why isn't that music in the orchestra?" cried the stage manager.

"I rang the bell," said the prompter.

"Ring again."

He did ring it again.

"What'r you 'bout down there?" bawled the man up in the flies, "are you all bilin' drunk—a-ringin' that air bell an' not givin' me a plot of any drops—blast it all what'm I to let down anyhow?"

"Nobody rung the bell."

"Can't I hear?"

"Hear thunder!"

Meantime the stage manager gave the bell a pull.

"Now then," shouted the "fly" man up above to those on the stage, "there it is agin. Now who's the liar?"

Corkey unnoticed—had been standing near the prompt place.

He reached up and gave two or three of the bells a pull one after the other.

Scarcely had they rang than up went the curtain, out came the orchestra.

The sight of the half set stage with all the people rushing off it, and all the unsightly confusion upon it, started the audience into a series of roars and cat calls.

"Who rang that curtain bell?" half shrieked the stage manager.

"Ring that curtain down," bawled Jawkins.

"You cursed idiots!" cried Ataliba who in rushing off had dropped his wig, "wot is the stage a-coming to?"

The poor prompter swore he had not touched the curtain bell.

Corkey when he rang the bells dropped back into the semi darkness back of the first entrance wings.

He had nothing to say. But he was an amazingly good listener.

"It's better than two circusses," he whispered to Johnny.

"Bigger'n a snake show," whispered Johnny in reply.

Then an inspection was had of the bell pulls, the curtain having been dropped after shouting up to the curtain man loud enough for the whole audience to hear it.

After considerable trial the right bell was discovered, the paper slips torn off and everything seemed all right.

But there was trouble yet ahead.

The slips with "Front lights" "foot lights" over the little movable regulators at the prompter's place, for the regulation of the gas had not been noticed.

The orchestra played their overture, and the curtain went up.

Then the prompter turned as he thought the lights half down in front as is the custom.

But the thing didn't work.

Instead of turning down the lights in front, he turned all the stage lights down to a faint glimmer.

Then seeing his mistake he made a desperate rush at another one of the guages, and then down went the footlights.

What a roar went up from the audience, and Jawkins rushed wildly off as nearly out of his senses as he had ever been.

"Are you crazy or drunk?" cried the stage manager grabbing the unlucky frightened prompter by the scruff of the neck.

"Disengage him on the spot," growled Jawkins.

"Nice theater this is."

"More light!"

"Pay your gas bills!"

"Let her rip!"

"Git a box of taller dips."

"Fire off a match!"

"Hoorra, set 'em up on the long alley!"

These and score of other cries and a pandemonium of whistles, yells and catcalls, with a continuous stamping and thumping filled the air in the front of the house.

When the stage manager grabbed the prompter, the latter, in flinging himself around to get loose, accidentally flung his arm up just in time for his hand to light with full force in the face and on the nose of Jawkins.

Now Jawkins had no notion of taking tamely any such insult as that.

Besides, he thought the prompter did it purposely.

So he quietly hauled off and gave the prompter a flat handed stinger on his left ear which made him see more lights and stars than were ever in any dozen theatres in the country at any one time.

This stinger riled the prompter, and yanking loose from the stage manager he struck for his altars and fires, struck out wildly with both fists.

His southern blood was up, and the night's business had completely fuddled him, so that just then he was very nearly in a fit condition for an A.I. straight jacket with padded cell trimmings.

Striking out in the dark, his fist went into the countenance of an intervening scene shifter, who as in duty bound, immediately let go his right which accidentally came to a full stop in the eye of the property man and floored him.

Corkey ran out from behind the wing just in time to be caught in the grip of the property man and went down with him.

Corkey saw a brilliant chance to keep up the uproar. So when he fell on top of the property man, he hit that individual a punch or two in the bread basket and then set up an awful yell, a series of yells interspersed with the cry of:

"Murder, take him off, he's a killin' me, take him off."

While all this was going on the curtain had been rung down, but it had increased the noise in front.

But above all and clear out in front the yelling voice of Corkey was heard, and then the tumult became frightful.

"Part 'em."

"Tear them a-s-u-n-d-e-r!" thundered Jawkins.

"Don't let the boy be murdered in cold blood."

"He's a stabbin' me," cried Corkey, so full of laughter at the same time that it was a wonder he could shout at all.

The stage manager and Jawkins got hold of the pair of supposed fighters, the property man was unconsciously yanked up on his feet, and Corkey very kindly permitted the same operation to be performed upon him.

"Poor boy," said Elvira.

"What a brute that property man is," put in Cora.

"Dammit I didn't touch him," groaned the property man, whose bones ached with the treatment he had received.

As for the prompter he had gathered himself up and left.

The lights were at last regulated, and, in order to quiet the audience, the stage manager stepped in front of the curtain and made a little quieting speech, and closed with the announcement that the performance of the soul-inspiring and grandly heroic tragedy of "Pizarro or the death of Rolla" would at once proceed.

Everything being settled and calmed down on the stage, the curtain once more went up, and Jawkins began spouting.

"My eye," said Corkey to Johnny, as the two sat together upon a painted bank behind a pile of flats enjoying the fun they had had, "wasn't that a racket?"

"Didn't that air prop fakir howl?"

"And you orter seen Jawkins give that air prompter chap a skite in the mug! Jemmeny, didn't he lift him. You bet he did," said Corkey.

"Didn't that air prop fakir hit you, hay?"

"Not a wonst. He only pulled me down on them. I thought, seein' it was awful dark where we was that I'd git up a little job onto him."

"Ef they ever furgits Jawkins' death in Roller in this shop, it'll be next year."

Corkey got up, knocked his heels together, and danced.

"Wasn't it rich?"

"I say, Corkey, are you goin' to tell de boss?"

"Not much, I ain't a fool, I ain't. Let him find out ef he wants to know."

"Corkey!"

Corkey looked around. When he heard his name called he was standing in one of the upper entrances of the theater.

"Corkey!"

"That's the boss a callin' you," said Johnny.

"Where is he?"

"Let him yell again," suggested Johnny.

He did "yell" again.

"Corkey, dammit where are you?" cried the voice.

Corkey started down the stage behind the wings.

"Why didn't you come when I called?"

"Thought it was that air stage manager, an' I don't move a foot to the square inch fer him."

Jawkins was standing down near the prompter's place when he first called Corkey.

"Corkey," he whispered, "I want you after the play is over to take my traps and props, quietly pack 'em up and take them over to the hotel. I won't stay another day; we'll start for the east to-morrow. I'll throw up my engagement in this infernal hole."

Jawkins was as mad as a March hare.

"Anything gone wrong, boss?" asked Corkey.

"Gone wrong! Great Caesar! everything gone every other way but right. Company all drunk or crazy and don't know a line of their parts—it's awful!"

"Puffectly orful," echoed Corkey, "but wot'll the manager do!"

"What he pleases. I'll take care of him. You do as I tell you, that's all. To-morrow morning at the 4 o'clock train meet me."

"Kerect, boss."

When the curtain went down on the last act Corkey packed up everything for Jawkins and carried the things over to his hotel.

But neither Jawkins nor Corkey while the former was disclosing his intended sudden and secret departure imagined that on the other side of the wing next to the prompt place was standing a listener.

A little bow-legged supe, an especial favorite of the stage manager.

No sooner did he hear Jawkins assert his resolve to skip off next morning and leave things in the lurch, than he made a dead bolt to the manager and let the cat out of the bag.

The manager stormed.

"Skip, will he—break his engagement, will he? I'll serve him a trick worth two of it. I'll get out a writ—I'll meet him at the depot—I'll—I'll—damme if I don't make him the sickest man in town."

This he uttered in his rage, in the green-room.

There was no one except the supe in there at the time.

But just outside the door, within hearing, Johnny happened to be standing, or rather waiting for Corkey to come down from Jawkins' dressing-room.

He was not listening—but nevertheless he heard the manager's threat.

He slipped away up to the dressing-room, and told Corkey in a whisper.

"All right," said Corkey, "ke-rect. I'll git up a game with two of it, see if I don't. You needn't tell the boss, coz it'll only kick up a muss and spile our fun."

Corkey before he left the theater that night, made it his business to catch that little bow-legged supe at the back of the stage and give him a terrific kicking, winding up the performance by giving him a sock-dolager in the left peeper that sent him sprawling upon the floor, his head plunging into a bucket full of cold glue size.

When that supe got up howling and roaring and sputtering, he looked as if somebody had been using him for a mop and swabbed up the floor with him.

"What—wo—wo—what er yer a lickin' me fer, you big brute."

"Dry up er I'll give you another bouncin'. I've jist warmed you 'cos I wanted ter try my muscle on suthin' lively. Now, yer go soak yerself."

Corkey waltzed off, followed by Johnny, who turned a cartwheel flip flap in his delight.

"My eye didn't he git up an' howl? Corkey, you're a brute, you air."

Jawkins, innocent of coming evil went to his hotel, and prepared for his departure for the east.

Corkey was standing at the office counter waiting for

his "boss" to come down. The carriage—Jawkins had ordered it, was at the door.

A stout, burly man with a cock eye asked the clerk:

"I want to see Mr. Jawkins?"

Corkey "gunned" this fellow.

"That's a 'ossifer," thought Corkey, "with the body snatchin' writ. I'll cook his goose, ef I can."

"Mr. Jawkins 'll be down in a moment," answered the clerk. "This lad is his dresser."

The cock-eyed man looked down at Corkey and Corkey looked up at him.

"Mister Jawkins you want?" said Corkey.

"Yes."

"He's bin gone five minits," said Corkey.

"What?"

"Five minits. He's at the depot by this time."

"Great Moses!" exclaimed cock-eye, "is that so?" and he bolted off like a shot off of a shovel.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Corkey. Then to the clerk he said: "Who's that feller?"

"Constable," was the short, curt reply.

"Kerrect," said Corkey, "set 'em up again."

At this moment Jawkins came down stairs into the office.

Corkey buttoned him.

"Boss, don't ride to the depot. You walk," and then he told him of the constable's appearance.

"Oh, ho, I see," said Jawkins.

"You jest foller me—lem me go first," said Corkey, "and I'll salt 'em. You slip inter the baggage keer an' I'll fix things."

So it was fixed.

Corkey got to the depot, and sure enough, there was the cock-eyed constable watching everybody getting in the train.

Jawkins had slipped around into the baggage car unobserved.

"Ha, my boy," said cock-eye. "Jawkins isn't here yet?"

"No? That's singular. Dey're know him when you see him?"

"Well no—only seen him on the stage."

"Well, when he comes, I'll point him out," put in Corkey.

Presently a man poorly dressed, carrying a black valise in his hand and an extra coat over his arm came rushing in and made for one of the cars.

He had a remote resemblance to Jawkins.

"That's Jawkins," said Corkey.

"He's my mutton then," exclaimed the constable, and he at once made a dive for the man with the valise.

Just as he was putting his foot on the car steps the constable put his hand on his shoulder.

"I want you."

The valise man turned and glared at the constable, "Who are you, eh?"

"Oh, I know you—it's all right—but you'll have to wait for the next train. I have a writ."

The valise man for a moment said nothing—then he said: "Get out—none of your tricks on me."

Then the constable grasped him—"no you don't, Mr. Jawkins."

"Mister who?"

"Mister Jawkins—oh, I know you. Now don't make a fuss—it'll be all right to-morrow morning, you know."

"You let go of me! I'm not Jawkins or Sawkins—my name's Smith!"

"That's too thin." The constable grabbed him by the arm.

That man with the valise at once imagined this was some dodge put up to rob him.

He made a sudden jerk to get loose from the constable's grip, and to help along the matter, flung his valise around and it landed full in the victualing department of the constable.

"Wot!" roared the now exasperated official, "resist an officer. I'll show you, you miserable, drunken, swindlin' show actor—now you've got to come."

He clinched the valise man and then there was just the liveliest tussle, scratching, swearing, puffing and blowing old time, seen in that depot for many a day.

Jawkins, from the baggage car, was looking on and taking it all in.

Corkey and Johnny were roaring.

The constable was much the stronger man of the two, so he soon got the innocent valise man down upon the floor and wiped him around and finally slipped a pair of "bracelets" upon his victim's wrists, and that ended any further show of fight.

The valise man when he got up looked as if he had been dragged through a year of poverty into the condition of a dilapidated tramp.

Just then the conductor yelled out, "all aboard."

Corkey and Johnny bounded upon one of the cars.

The train moved off. As it did so Corkey was standing on the platform of his car as it moved slowly past the handcuffed man with the valise.

"Hi!" cried Corkey to the constable, "you've got him?"

"All right," said the constable.

"But you hain't got Jawkins, old feller!"

"Wot?"

"Jawkins is aboard the train," cried Corkey.

And away they went and Corkey looking back saw that constable swinging his arms and shaking his fist at the entire train.

Corkey wasn't forgotten by that constable or his victim either for a particularly long time.

On they sped. Jawkins patted Corkey on the shoulder "You're a trump, plum through and through," he said, "and you shan't suffer for grub or pocket money as long as Jawkins has a cent."

And Jawkins meant it too.

In due time they arrived in New York, and Jawkins began his engagement at the Bowery, and through he retained Corkey and Johnny.

Just before the close of his engagement, Jawkins received a letter from Canada announcing the death of an old maiden aunt, and the fact that she had left him all her wealth—some thirty thousand dollars.

"Corkey," he said, striking an attitude, "now then I will ring down. No more acting for me. I'll build a theatre, by the great Caesar! and the way I'll make these gripsacks and sticks stand around 'll make their heads swim. I'll build a new Bowery Theatre."

But he didn't. He kept on acting.

He gave Corkey and Johnny a liberal start in the world.

Corkey and Johnny with the aid of Jawkins started in business, a side show in Chatham Street.

"Two big snakes, a bore constructor an' a wild, untamed viper from the Cannibal Islands, besides an wiry rubber fat man and a eddicated monkey. Only ten cents to see the whole show!"

Corkey was happy because being the "Boss" of the show he could indulge in all sorts of rackets and have every day a good time and jolly fun with "Our Boys" whenever they came.

[THE END.]

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